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GRASS OF THE DESERT



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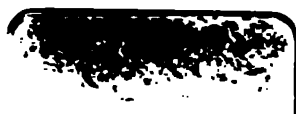


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*Ralph Ludcliffe-Whithead.*

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## GRASS OF THE DESERT



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# GRASS OF THE DESERT

BY  
RALPH RADCLIFFE-WHITEHEAD



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LONDON  
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1892

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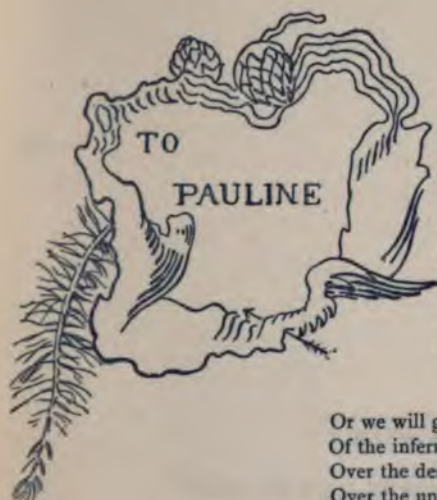
The Author,  
Grasse, France.



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"I tell you nought has ever been so clear  
As the place, the time, the fashion of those lives,

. . . . . never morn broke clear as those  
On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea,  
The deep groves and white temples and wet caves,  
And nothing ever will surprise me now—  
Who stood beside the naked swift-footed,  
Who bound my forehead with Proserpina's hair.


. . . . .

Or we will go together like twin gods  
Of the infernal world, with scented lamp  
Over the dead to call and to awake,  
Over the unshaped images which lie  
Within my mind's cave : only leaving all  
That tells of the past doubt, so when spring comes  
With sunshine back again like an old smile,  
And the fresh waters and awakened birds  
And budding woods await us, I shall be  
Prepared, and we will question life once more  
Till its old sense shall come renewed by change,  
Like some clear thought that harsh words veiled before.

. . . . .

Suntreader, I believe in God and truth  
And love, and as one just escaped from death  
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel  
He lives indeed, so I would lean on thee."





**"O lyric Love, half angel and half bird  
And all a wonder and a wild desire,—  
Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,  
Took sanctuary within the holier blue."**

I.

TUSCANY TO VENICE.

Chère, très chère Bettine, qui comprend l'art, avec qui s'entretenir de  
cette grande divinité?



B





## TUSCANY TO VENICE.

Florence,

May 2, 1890.



OME one has asked how it is that when one comes from Tuscany the beauty of Venice seems purely sensuous, and why we pass by the pictures of the great Venetians in the Doge's Palace as if they were so many yards of wall-paper. If the same question had been put about the Paris of *Badinquet* the answer would have been prompt, but because Mr. Ruskin has cast a glamour of poetry over the stones and pictures of Venice, and he and all those we know who are cunning in painting, nay, we ourselves too, when we open our eyes wide enough, are convinced of the supremacy in colour of the Venetian artists, we find it difficult to reconcile the contradiction.

The same kind of difficulty is present to many who go from Tuscany or Umbria to Rome; they cannot fail to see the beauties of Raphael's frescoes and of the architecture of the Roman Renaissance, but from the one as from the other they feel that something is wanting, which they had known in Tuscany; something that made them feel at home among the frescoes of the Cambio, and in the courtyard of the Bargello, and which not all the greater skill of execution in painting, nor the

greater luxuriance of decoration in architecture can make up for; most of them conclude: "This Rome and that Venice are more beautiful, but the quattrocento of Tuscany and of Umbria touches me more; I cannot have been properly trained to appreciate art."

Now this is very nice and very modest, but it is not true. It is precisely because you have a finer appreciation of the higher beauties of art and life that your eyes refuse to be charmed by the surface glamour and the clever conceits of these later artists.

Let us leave Rome till some of us go there again; she has beauties of her own, and will ever be a name to conjure with, even if we care little for the beginning of her decadence in art, which our grandfathers took to be the culminating point of her splendour, and let us loaf in a gondola through the city of the Doges.

We have seen many pictures together, and have heard much of the same music, we have read many of the same poems, and we know that at the bottom we are agreed about all these. But we have talked little of the generalizations of criticism and of philosophy, and we must first of all make sure that we understand each other as well in expression as we do in reality.

The analysis of beauty, and of the emotions it excites in us, is often a thankless task, for it is very difficult to hold the balance between that just expression of our inward thoughts and longings, which helps to fix them and to give them strength, and, in the other scale, that sentimentality through which we say more than we really feel, and which makes us speak of feelings which are real, it is true, but which no sympathy can strengthen, and which become, as it were, diluted



by being exposed to another, however near and dear; for in this too "each man must bear his own burden."

It is the function of art to give expression to that which mere words cannot convey. The production of high artistic beauty implies a state of feeling in which, unless we can share, our criticism may be interesting as matters of history or archæology, but we do not reach the kernel of the matter at all. To take a simple instance in nature: the lily of the *Madonna* is to us something more than that which its classification by a botanist or the description of its growth by a gardener can ever tell us. They, as such, know nothing of the beauty of the lily; this is very complex, and we will some day try to find out in a rough way in what it consists; but for the moment just think of the difficulty of speaking of it; if we begin to say anything beyond "How lovely it is!" we run the risk at once of being carried away by mere words not backed by real feeling, or of letting the enthusiasm of the moment make us throw off the armour of a right reserve. These two mistakes are apt to be confused under the reproach of "sentimentality." Yet, on the other hand, "How lovely it is!" does not express much, and the result is that in view of a beautiful flower, as in presence of the glory of sunset, we are silent; and silence is best. But it is otherwise when we come to talk of the artistic merit of a picture; and, since a painter uses natural objects, we are driven to speak of the beauty of these too, and must face the expression of our real sentiments whether we like it or not. It only remains for us to choose the company in which we talk.

Good criticism brings out what is good in its subject, and makes us dislike what is bad by antithesis. Let us not forget that when we talk of the glamour of Venetian colour, and the

pride and pomp of the Roman Renaissance, not only that there are remnants of beauty in these, but that they each had an earlier period of real strength, which it is well worth while to consider carefully, even if it has not for us the charm of our Tuscany. It is small wonder if Desdemona and Caterina Cornaro do not touch us with the magic mystery of Beatrice, still they are no common women, and if we have the fortune to meet them we cannot afford to look the other way. Now let us premise that art shows us the beauties of nature which we had passed by unheeded, and, besides this, reveals to us in a dim way the hidden realities of which religion spoke to our fathers. The ultimate facts of "God" and "Heaven" and "Soul" and "Immortality" we can be content to leave unanalyzed; let us agree however in this, that even if we have no hope of individual life beyond the grave, and no belief in a personal God working in this universe, or standing outside it in a sphere of his own, still these words, with their historic associations, correspond more or less closely to certain feelings occasionally alive in us, which we would rather foster than repress, and of which we have no more right to deny the existence than to deny the existence of the boots we wear. The moral law is best regarded in the same way; whether the world is the expression of reason or merely a confused jumble of chances,—we do not perhaps grasp the problem intelligibly, and are as incapable of understanding it, as a savage, who can only count up to six, is incapable of understanding a mathematical problem,—one thing each of us, whose mind is not warped by disease or by bad bringing up, knows for himself, that he has a bit of reason in him, and that, even if the heavens vanish and the earth withers away, it is his business to keep this alive, and to show that he is true, if all men, and nature too, seem to be

liars. Therefore, if we may not be able to find any ultimate grounds for our morality, we may still with reason talk of "virtue" and "justice," even in those bitter days when we are inclined to admit that these are, like the kingdom of God, "not without us as a fact, but within us as a great yearning."

Let us then not hesitate to use the words, "God," "virtue," "right," "ideal," hoping that, if they are to us now mere outlines, we shall, as our discussion goes on, help each other to fill them with colour till they assume a living form.

The highest object of religion, as of art, is to "set our affections on things that are above, not on things that are of this earth." Why should this be so when we are placed in the midst of this fair earth, and when it would seem that the wisest course for man, not knowing what the morrow may bring forth, is to gather roses while he may? The answer is given by Plato, but perhaps in a simpler form by the founder of Christianity: "He that seeks his life shall lose it, he that loses his life for my sake shall surely find it." It is only by setting our affections on those things which the New Testament calls "eternal" that we become capable of enjoying to the full our surroundings on this earth.

The desire for higher enjoyment, as the desire to do right, which we call conscience, is developed in very different strength in different individuals; both may be increased by intellectual culture, though intellect alone cannot render our lives moral, nor give enthusiasm to our natures. The desire for what is beautiful and the wish to do right must be implanted in us by nature, by which we mean heredity and early associations; the development of the intellect, however, can increase our capacity for right-doing; for instance, when our mind recognizes the truth of the great Aristotelian



doctrine of habits, and sees that by doing what is right once we make it easier for ourselves to do right again, or the truth of the Christian saying, "Whatever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might," we are more likely to act reasonably, our will being thus consciously impelled towards what is right. The "setting our affections on those things that are above" by no means implies an ascetic withdrawal from the pleasures of the world around us; it is only by living in the world that we can realize the desire of our soul for heaven. We have no other sphere of action. Here or nowhere we must "acquire our true lives." Monkish asceticism we can, now-a-days, look upon as suitable only for very exceptional, and often, though not always, badly balanced natures. In the early Christian centuries, owing to the different customs of society, and the lesser amount of liberty permitted to the individual, the complete withdrawal from the "world" was oftener than it is now a reasonable course.

The Stoic indeed, that intellectual forerunner of the monk, wished to make man free by crushing out his desires for material objects and for the pleasures of sense, and ended by denying him the higher satisfactions of social life and of art, which, far from tying him down to the exigencies of the moment, may raise him into freedom from individual wants.

The Epicurean sought directly for the pleasures of this world, first for those of the senses, and, finding that they soon palled, for the higher pleasures of art and society. He failed, becoming too much the slave of the means by which such pleasures are attainable, too much dependent on things outside himself.

We, with the light of all the centuries shining down on us, must find a better way, or perish in sheer *ennui*. And

in modern literature and art there are signs that, although we are still groping rather blindly, we are not far from the goal. We must raise the contradiction of the Stoic and the Epicurean into a region of higher morality, in which the truth of each is not abolished, but taken up into a deeper truth, rendering us really free from the trammels of circumstance, yet giving us a keener enjoyment of this earth on which we have our seventy years to run.

It is the faith in the world of things unseen that makes it possible for us to bear the buffets of fortune, and the ills and deprivations of life. The difficulty is to get over the three great facts of illness, which maims mind and body; of death, which cuts off our friends in their prime; and of the evil fate of the greater part of mankind who are so closely akin to us, and who, through no fault of their own,—through heredity, through early bringing up, through the material misery of their daily lives,—cannot rise to the point to which good parents, happy childhood, culture, and friendship have brought us, to the point from which we attain an occasional glimpse of the world of “ideas” which enables us to scorn and yet to enjoy the earth we live on.

To the attainment of this each man must be helped by something outside of himself,—one by being absorbed in the pursuit of knowledge,—one by devotion to a political cause,—one by success in business, not for the sake of personal aggrandizement, but for the mere pleasure of success,—one by his friends, who are more to him than all the world besides,—one by his mistress, for whom he would leave even his friends,—one by a form, which, embodying all that experience, and history, and poetry have taught him, gilt by the light of all the sunrises, and clothed in the quaint embroidery of romance,

lives for him with a life almost material in its vividness, but more real than man or woman can be, because, like "quella gentilissima Beatrice," it has been sublimed by being passed through the waters of Lethe, and by being dipped in that other stream of gentle "good-will."

These, each and all, and the common kindness of daily life, may take a man out of himself, and cause him to gain his life while, in the eyes of the world, he is apparently losing it. He who has never been so absorbed knows not what life is, and is no more capable of passing a judgment on its pleasures than the man whose musical experience is only of Offenbach and his kin can be said to have an opinion on the music of Schumann and of Liszt.

Whatever tends to keep alive the sacred fire of the ideal, which is the negation of man's individuality, and at the same time the truest and most intense expression of his self, is surely not to be rejected or despised; and to some of us who have no very definite religious creed, nor are strong enough to "find our lives" in competition with our fellow men for worldly success, the realms of sentiment are still open from which to draw a hallowing influence for our idler days, and to raise what culture we possess from the rubbish heaps of dusty knowledge to the bright mountain tops of wisdom. We need it more than others, but none can do without it without becoming hard and dull.

What then is this "sentiment"? Let us take a common instance: to Peter Bell "a primrose by the river's brim A yellow primrose was to him, and it was nothing more"; "well," says our practical matter-of-fact friend, "what would you have it to be more? Is it not sufficient as a beautiful object, a graceful shape, and a patch of pretty colour?"

"Yes," we answer, "we admire its beauty as much as you : but even its form and colour you have probably only noticed because we have talked of them before you. Your liking for these resembles your admiration for Shakespeare, whom you talk of because other people do so. Perhaps you have even acquired a sort of superior sense of smell, which enables you occasionally to recognize what is good in literature as you know a vintage claret. Of course it is a good thing for you to have this slight and indirect appreciation of beauty, just as it is a good thing that you should know Margaux from Lafitte ; it gives you, no doubt, an additional interest, and helps you to pass the days more pleasantly ; but if you imagine that, regarding the world as an orange to suck, you even get all the pleasure its pulp can give, and if you are incapable of seeing anything in it but merely swallowable juiciness, you and I can jog along together pleasantly enough, perhaps, but, like a Catholic and a Protestant at the dinner table of life, we had better agree to avoid those subjects on which we differ, and on which we flatly deny your right to an opinion at all, because you have no facts of experience to go upon."

What the "more" is, and what makes up the beauty of the lily, we shall want much preliminary clearance to get at ; but this at least we may agree upon : we want in art the expression of great and good characters, trusting to our instinct that a thing of beauty is really "a joy for ever," and that anything joyful or right must have some accompaniment of beauty, if we have only eyes to see it ; and we want the expression, not only of the intellect, but of the affections, and we want "the balance of both, and their government by Discretion, the daughter of Conscience," and

we want them shown in the delight of life, for we too have our seventy years to run, and would fain run as merrily as may be.

But life is not always joyful, nor is there always "peace on earth"; and should our good man encounter woe in his own life, or be brought into contact with suffering, we want him to express his sorrow or his sympathy as those do who are strong and able to help themselves and others to bear the brunt of calamity when it comes. We care not for the show of weakness, nor for naked horrors depicted for their own sake, though we are ready to admit that the temptation of St. Anthony, or the denial of Christ by Peter, or the massacre of the Innocents, may all be capable of artistic expression, and therefore, on occasion, correct subjects for painting.

Venice,

*May 14, 1890.*

I have been working hard here for a few days, trying to gain the knowledge necessary to the answering of your questions, and to formulate into thoughts the vague feelings that Venice once again calls up by the magic of her beauty—and by the charm of her historic associations. The latter are to me very vague, for the most part mere names, her Doges being known to me chiefly by the cap in which Giambellini painted one of them, and by the story of their bridal with the sea.

For me her attraction lies far more in her scenery and in her architecture. The charms of the scenery, like those of the Oberland and of the Bay of Naples, are patent in some degree even to the passing tourist. But I would not choose



Venice for a home; the sea is always strange to me; I am more comfortable on a horse than in a boat; the "good gigantic smile of the brown earth" is more to be reckoned on than the rippling laughter of the sea. When the sun is lighting up the lagoons and the Adriatic, Venice is lovely indeed, but when the sky is grey, or on a cold night, the water gives me a shiver to the marrow.

The delight of Venice is much enhanced by the expanse of sky; as one lies in a gondola the light and the clouds and the blue seem to be more about one than when one is walking about another town, in the position of which man is proud, because it makes him different from the beasts; and the absence of dust, and of rattle and vibration, makes life here almost as restful as in the seclusion of the mountains.

And then her architecture: the power of architecture is great from two causes, partly because, like music, its expression is independent of the imitation of natural objects, and partly because, like language, it is the expression of the genius of a nation, not of an individual, and has therefore a force akin to that of an epic poem.

Here, in Venice, the interest is increased by our standing at the meeting-point of the Orient and the North, of Byzantine and Gothic, on the same spot where, afterwards, one of the finest developments of the Roman Renaissance raised palaces to compete in pride with those of Genoa.

In her early architecture, and in all her paintings, it is by colour that she excels, and this she got from the East. It is sometimes said that no one can be really vicious who is moved by music; this has, perhaps, only a little germ of truth in it, for he whom music moves may be very weak, and weakness and wickedness are twin brothers. With

about as much truth it has been said by Mr. Ruskin that no art is really degraded of which the colour is beautiful. Let us remember this when we come to stand before the scene-painting of Tintoretto and the sensuous charms of Titian's nudities. The purity of Angelico finds its most direct expression in his colour, and I think that the poetry of two of the greatest painters of our day, Rossetti and Watts, is most perfectly realized in their colour; in literature, too, the sense of colour is a supreme gift which accompanies enthusiasm and purity. You remember the glory of the "sapphire throne," and "the gates of that New Jerusalem"; and you will some day see the light of Paradise and of the saints whom Dante saw, no longer in the dulness of human form, but as stars that glowed with various brilliance, white in the Purity undimmed by earth, green in the Hope of eternal peace, and red with that "Love, the mother of all virtues," which had led them and him up to that central heaven which is fixed, and shall never be moved. I shall ask you to read a few chapters of my old master's early writings; I will note down the numbers when I have the books again before me. Meantime, let me quote you, from the "Stones of Venice," a few lines which seem to me very true and to help to explain the power of her painters: "All good colour is in some degree pensive, the loveliest is melancholy, and the purest and most thoughtful minds are those which love colour the most"; you must allow here, as always, for Ruskin's failing: he is often carried away by the thought of the moment to exaggerate its importance, and to extend its bearing too far. "I know of no law more serenely without exception than this of the connection of pure colour with profound and noble thought. The late Flemish painters,



shallow in conception and obscene in subject, are always sober in colour. But the early religious painting of the Flemings is as brilliant in hue as it is holy in thought." Some day we must go to Bruges and see the Memlings; Memling and Van Eyck were the greatest colourists of all the old northern schools. "The Bellinis, Francias, Peruginos, are painted in crimson and blue and gold. The Caraccis, Guidos, and Rembrandts, in brown and grey. The builders of our great cathedrals veiled their casements and wrapped their pillars with one robe of purple splendour. The builders of the luxurious renaissance left their palaces filled only with cold white light and in the paleness of their native stone."<sup>1</sup> What a contrast there is between the dome of a Byzantine church glowing with gold, or the blue cross-vaulting of a Gothic building,—(Or San Michele),—and the whitewashed sepulchres in which the Tuscan cinquecento was content to worship; even Brunelleschi's San Spirito is ghastly in its grey *pietra serena* against the cold blank walls.

When we talk of *Venetian* painting and architecture, let us be sure that we understand each other; let us take Cima and Carpaccio and Giambellini as examples of the religious school of painting in Venice, and Titian, Tintoret, and Veronese of the naturalistic, and let us remember that the beginnings of the school which culminated in Bellini are to be sought in the early Christian mosaics.

And when we talk of Venetian architecture, we must try to separate clearly the different types, which in reality are often mixed in the same building, owing to its construction having lasted through centuries, or its primitive form having

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. p. 144.



been "restored" and spoiled by a later hand. There are three chief types to be fixed in our minds :—

1. The Byzantine, as represented by the older part of St. Mark's and of the *Duomo* of Murano ; this, in some particulars, recalls the Norman of the north.

2. The Gothic, of which the older part of the Ducal Palace is the central example.

3. The Renaissance, beginning with the *Scuola di San Marco* and the *Chiesa dei Miracoli*, passing on through the glorious pride of Sansovino in the old library and the east side of the Palace court, and then sinking, through the pomp of the *Salute*, to the vulgar nonentity of *Santa Maria Formosa* and the church of *San Moïse*.

This time at Venice I have been especially struck by two things,—strangely incongruous they will sound to you : the Byzantine mosaics, and the naturalism of Tintoret. You have not forgotten Assisi ; in Florence we had jeered a little at the old painters, or, perhaps, really at our own incapacity of understanding anything older than the later quattrocento ; we had passed through Santa Maria Novella without so much as a glance at Cimabue's Madonna ; we had smiled at Giotto's frescoes on the vaults of the lower church of Assisi, when suddenly the great goddess looked down on us through the eyes of Cimabue's picture, and there arose into the fulness of life another bond of sympathy with the "dark ages," and one of us at least took a step backwards from the Renaissance and the nineteenth century, and returned in thought to the times when men built the cathedrals of France and England, Chartres and Reims, Norwich and Salisbury, and to that still older time known to us in Santa Sophia and at Ravenna, and wondered whether perchance the Albert Hall was a thing to be as proud



of as of the domes of St. Mark's, and whether all the clever realism which covers the walls of our "Academies" and "Salons" would touch one living man after eight hundred years, as does still some stiff Byzantine mosaic of the days before Cimabue; and recognized with a great joy, as on the discovery of a spring amid the desert's sand, that for us at least that blue mother of God in the golden cupola of Murano was a living voice, shaming into silence the insipidity of the last new fashionable beauty by Millais, and the siren's songs of Boecklin and of modern Paris.

"There are flashes struck from midnights,  
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,  
Whereby piled up honours perish,  
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,"

and here, before this old Byzantine symbolism, the pride and ambition of the Renaissance pass away like the unsubstantial visions of the night, and we are again as little children in the days when the world was young; happy as children we can never be again, for we have eaten of the tree of knowledge and know the power of death, but the simplicity and the directness of life are open to us yet.

All great men, and all great nations, have preserved something of this childlike simplicity; as the Egyptian priest said to Herodotus, "You Greeks are always children,"—those Greeks to whom we look for ideals of beauty in architecture and sculpture, and on whom we are apt to father the Renaissance. Yet it is true; true of Homer and the wanderings of Ulysses, true of Cadmus and Œdipus, true of Heracles and even of Hippolytus, true of Sophocles and Plato, true of the comedies of Aristophanes and of the frieze of the Parthenon.

And we of this late century, how shall we without affectation

attain to the *naïveté* of an earlier time? Our education is oppressive, our life requires as much apparatus as that of a Roman under Augustus; knowledge has increased till each man must be a specialist, and the division of intellectual, as of manual labour, has reduced us to being the mere attendants on machines; we live more in the night, by light which it takes labour to produce, than by day, when the sun shines unpaid; even our music is no longer music, but musical drama, risen, like some monstrous dragon of the Rhine, to drive out Apollo now that the world is old; our faith in heaven, where our fathers hoped to rest from their labours, is dim or null; we have neither the expectation of meeting Pan in the woods of Arcady, nor of being raised with Christ from the dead. It is hard, but it is not impossible; the glory of the Sun and the light of the stars are still there for us to see if we will only open our eyes, and the morning breeze blows fresh with health from the sea, as it did to Ulysses long ago; spring raises the flowers of earth, and autumn gilds and burnishes the woods with gold and crimson still, and simple human affections are still as strong as in the days when David wept for Absalom, and Antigone sought death at her brother's tomb. All the joys that men of former ages have known are open to us in equal degree, except those merely physical ones, for in the body we are weaker than they; but to make up for this, have we not the greater force of a life which is stronger because more complex, having been nursed in the tradition of a longer development, more conscious of itself and of its power?

But custom does "make cowards of us all." We must, if we would have the joys of children, cast off the weight of artificiality laid on us by the *blasé* "world," and trust more to our own natures to tell us what is right and pleasurable. Then,

too, we must feel more and cavil less,—we are indeed “nothing if not critical.” We must use our reason more instead of our mere intellect, and we must be strong enough to be able to trust ourselves instead of the opinions of others. If we enjoy the oak woods carpeted with bluebells and the meadows yellow with buttercups more than the “bedding out” of *coleus* and *echeveria*, if we care more for the morning sunlight on the hills than for a second-rate comedy by electric light, and to ride over the Downs more than to show ourselves to our neighbours in the Row, why cannot we be strong to choose these pleasures for ourselves? We may be quite sure that there will be plenty left to keep going and develop the monstrous civilization of the cities. And if we do not follow that which our nature tells us is right and pleasant, the day will come, and comes often enough to some of us, when the curse of the prophet is on them “that call good evil and evil good,” and we are laid low with that disease which has been the canker of so much that was brightest and best of this century, that fatal *ennui* which made it possible for De Musset to give us *La confession d'un enfant du siècle*, and Swinburne his *Poems and Ballads*,—truly stones from those who might have given us bread.

That simplicity of which I have spoken as a criterion of all great art is worth thinking over. Some day let us try together to trace its power in national songs and in epic poetry, in the composition of pictures and in the decoration of buildings, in the strength of its being understood by the multitude, and in the power of its endless variety as seen whether in Gothic tracery, or in Persian carpets, or in Greek vases, or in the face of nature, on earth, and sky, and sea.

In painting this simplicity is very remarkable in the compositions of Giorgione, especially in the *Madonna* at Castel

Franco and in the *Three Ages of Man* in the *Palazzo Pitti*, and in modern days of Watts. In sculpture it is characteristic of early Greek, as of Assyrian and Egyptian work, and of the Tuscans of the time of Donatello. In music it is of course to be found in national songs, and is heard again in the majesty of Handel and the simplicity of Haydn, both of whom derived it from their Italian predecessors. In modern literature it gives the charm to the writing of Defoe and Stevenson. In all art it is a condition of the highest attainment. There is a peculiar spirit possessed by each individual, by every scene, and although a point of contrast may sometimes set off and exhibit more clearly this particular feeling, it must only be a point and not an equalized opposition. Every introduction of new and different feeling weakens the force of what has first been impressed, and the mingling of many emotions produces nausea or apathy. The barbarous vulgarity of many modern spectacles on the stage, where ears, eyes, and intellect are all called upon to attend to something different, is only perhaps equalled by the mixed programme of a concert where Bach and Wagner, Beethoven and Liszt, strike different notes of emotion one after the other, till what might have been enjoyment is as insipid as a dinner of ten courses.

We are agreed that in art we look for something called "religion," or "ideas," or "poetry,"—what the modern equivalent for religion can be will cost us much and serious thought; we find, too, that a certain childlike look on the world is characteristic of much that is great in literature and sculpture, and we are struck by this simplicity in the early Byzantine mosaics, and in the compositions of the religious school of Venetian painting, notably in Giambellini; we find, too, in both that brilliancy of colour which we saw was characteristic of, at



any rate, one class of genius, and 'now we see the same brilliance of colour in the later naturalist school of Venetian painting, from which, in a certain sense, the "ideal" is missing. Let us now try to gather grapes from a fig tree, perhaps we shall still find in the very colour of their paintings a scrap of that "ideal" which we miss in the expression of their faces.

But even in the early, and what I have called religious, painters of Venice we miss something which we found in the quattrocento of Tuscany and Umbria; in Carpaccio, when he is at his best, as in two of the St. Ursula series, I think that we feel nearer home, and in the statue of Colleoni our own Verrochio meets us half way.

Now the difference between the early painters of Venice and of Tuscany lies partly in what they wanted to express, and partly in their means of expressing it, or, more plainly, in the difference of characters of the Venetian and of the Tuscan of the fifteenth century, for a difference of nature will affect not only thought, but its expression. Form is inseparable from matter, expression from thought, but sometimes the opposition of the two in discussion helps us to make ourselves understood. Partly, then, it is a difference of national character. The Venetian was more reserved, the Tuscan more frank; the Venetian was clever enough in his own way, but lacked the bright sparkling wit of the Tuscan; you must not forget that Tuscany furnished Venice, as it did Rome, with much of its genius and artistic power. Even Bembo, though Venetian by birth, was educated in Tuscany. Pietro Aretino went from the Val d'Arno, Sansovino from Poggibonsi, and Tuscan Verrochio had great influence in Venetian sculpture. So it is in Rome; there all the glories of the cinquecento were due to Tuscan artists or their pupils.

Then, again, the Venetian was serious in the extreme, and had but little humour,—Carpaccio seems to be the one exception; this seriousness was apt to turn to heaviness, as in some of Bellini's Madonnas, and to pose, as in the later painters. The seriousness of an earlier time had not been incompatible with a grotesque humour, common almost to all Gothic art, but in the end this outlived high nobility of purpose, and the dignity and solemnity characteristic of Venice remains on the surface only. "No simple joy was possible to the Venetian, only stateliness and power, high intercourse with kings and beautiful humanity, proud thoughts and splendid pleasures."<sup>1</sup> "In other districts of Italy the dignity of the heads which occur in the most celebrated compositions is clearly owing to the feeling of the painter . . . . he has visibly idealized his models, and the best of his work is that which has most perfectly taken the colour of his own mind. But at Venice all is exactly the reverse of this. The tone of mind of the painters appears in some degree frivolous or sensual, but the moment he gives himself definitely to portraiture all is noble and grave, the more literally true his work the more majestic, and the same artist who will produce little beyond what is commonplace in painting a Madonna or an Apostle, will rise into unapproachable sublimity when his subject is a member of the Forty or a Master of the Mint."<sup>2</sup>

Much Venetian painting suggests the "grand manner" of the Spaniards. Titian was one of the favourite painters of Charles V. We are reminded, too, at many a turn of the pomp of imperial Rome, in the love of gorgeous pageant, and even in the physical beauty of some of the figures. The

<sup>1</sup> See Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. c. 6, and vol. v. p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. p. 164.



"great style" of Pagan times, typified in Virgil, is especially manifest in Titian, Veronese, Bonifazio, Palma Vecchio, and Sebastiano da Piombo. (To the last of these is now generally attributed the *Fornarina* of the Tribune.)

Now we, too, appreciate the direct joy in physical life of the Greeks, but we cannot withdraw ourselves from the effects of Christianity and Romanticism, nor do we wish to do so; and what we miss in the painters whom I have just mentioned is this half religious, half poetic element, which Botticelli, Lippo Lippi, and the Umbrian school give us so completely. The difference between the latter and Bellini may be compared to the difference between the Scotch psalter, with its accompanying tunes, and the glorious anthems of the early English cathedral service,—Protestant both, and both sincerely religious, but only the latter artistic and poetical. In the religious painters of Venice the religion is limited and prosaic as compared to that of the Tuscans. "Now no real literature of a high class exists produced by minds of the purely religious temper," and it seems to me that the charm of much of the so-called religious painting of Tuscany and Umbria arises from its expression being modified in a poetic or literary sense. They had always a spice of that freedom with which Dante, Catholic though he was, looked not only to Christ, but to the great spirits of Pagan times as well, and which led Botticelli and Michel Angelo to draw for us Sibyls beside their Prophets. The Tuscans had adopted all that was most poetic in the Greek religion—Apollo with his Muses and Sibyls, and that heaven-born Venus who rose immaculate from the foam of the sea; the Venetians had seen only the sensual side of ancient mythology, and could but paint that other Venus born on earth, or Danaë, or Europa, or the lower form of Bacchus.



Then the type of beauty is different ; but it is as difficult to explain why the Tuscan attracts us more than the Venetian, as it is for a man to say why the beauty of one woman carries him away and makes him her slave, while in the presence of another, equally beautiful, he is unmoved.

In the Venetian type a stateliness, like that of the old Romans, is crossed with the heaviness of the Lombard and the North. The country too, influencing strongly, no doubt, by its early impressions such men as Titian and Giorgione, was very different to Tuscany and Umbria. And here we must think not of Venice and the lagoons, but of that inland Venetia from which almost all the painters came. It is that district where the hills give the one hand to the Alps and the other to the plain. A curious fact about the pictures is the marked absence of any great representation of the sea ; the want of landscape generally is noticeable, architectural backgrounds taking the place of nature, except in a few glorious blue bits of rolling country in Titian and his contemporaries. The sky, too, is different, and the forms of the mountains ; here there are no olive-clad hills as in Tuscany, there is less sunniness, and the clear sky of Umbria is replaced by the clouds born of the storms of Adria, resting, as it were, for ever on the distant Alps.

I do not wonder that at first sight you did not care much for those pictures ; some have been so hurriedly painted, Tintoret's often like the side scenes of a theatre ; some have been almost obliterated by damp and time, others are so void of sentiment and so full of affectation ; about others Ruskin has written in such exaggerated praise, though generally with perfect insight, for we must not forget that it was he who first made known to us Tintoret and Carpaccio. Now Tintoret,

in spite of his hurry and his oft-times apparent want of sentiment, is the greatest figure painter the world has known, both as regards drawing and colour. This one only recognizes by careful attention, and through an opera-glass. The latter is absolutely indispensable in Venice.

There is a certain direct brilliancy of colour still to be seen in some parts of his frescoes, there is such a sure skill of drawing, and such power of chiaroscuro as no artist has since attained; greater than Raphael, not only in inventiveness, but in boldness of design, warmer and brighter than the Tuscans in colour, more lovely than Andrea in contour, what might he not have done had he had the ideas of a great age to prompt his hand; but the burden of sense was upon him, not that he was a sensualist in the common meaning of the word;—and Venice, whose Doge had once wedded the sea, and whose people had once worshipped the Mother of God, was floundering in a swamp of luxury and enervation, while skill in painting and architecture such as the world has not known since then, has left us no picture which produces as deep an impression as an old stiff Byzantine mosaic, nor any building as perfect for the worship of God or for the dwelling of man as had been raised in her own midst by the ruder craft of a more “barbarous” age.

Let us gather up the crumbs which remain, forgetting for a moment the glories which might have been; and if the later architecture of Venice is wanting in character and reserve, and if her painters of the *cinquecento* are devoid of “Ideas,” let us not on that account be blind to the exquisite proportion that is left us in the buildings of Sansovino and Lombardi, nor to the beauty of contour and colour in Titian and Tintoret.

Once again, “a thing of beauty is a joy for ever,” even

though that beauty is merely sensuous and conveys no further idea ; the colours of a Persian rug are lovely even if they call up no visions of the East from which they come ; and the curves of the nude figure in the *Glory of Venice* are as admirable as the curves of a dolphin's back, or of the petals of the *fleur de lys*. These need no associations suggested by science or mythology to attract our eyes. At times it is a relief for the over-taxed nerves and brain to revel in mere physical beauty, such as that of the Bay of Naples ; why not too in the beauty of the human form ? For my part I confess that I often go to a circus in the hopes of seeing some beautifully made man or woman ; and most of us, whose bodies are such poor things, may perhaps pause and consider whether our want of sympathy with the great Venetian painters is not born of jealousy of their superior models ; and as their beauty is merely physical, so their poetry is to be sought, not in their subjects nor in the expression of their faces, but in their contours and colours, in this resembling perhaps the music of Bellini and of Donizetti as contrasted with Bach and Beethoven.

The describing of pictures is a profitless task, and photography has as yet been unable to reproduce Venetian paintings, so that instead of a present description of the pictures you must be content with a promise of notes for your guidance when next you go to Venice. I had hoped to have made such on this visit, but the time was too short, and, to start with, I was still at sea ; another time I shall know what to look for.

May 18, 1890.

This is my last morning in Venice, and I must go just

when I am beginning to understand her architecture and her pictures: and thus it is always; we think that, given just a little more liberty, or a little better opportunity, we should do great things, and wail and lament because we must go "still like the thistle-ball, no bar, onward, wherever light winds blow, fixed by no friendly star, just when we seemed about to learn,"—forgetting in these intellectual longings, as in our personal desires, that it is this very limitation which makes our manhood, and that the God who knows no limit is really as void of life as Buddha, and as shapeless as Chaos itself. And now from St. George of the Seaweed, across the low expanse of the lagoon, the sun just risen behind Venice, calling up a mystic city of towers and cupolas, grey blue against the golden light, I send a greeting to you of the land of that other St. George, whose strength is yours, though you thank him not.







II.

## WORDS.

**Insatiable vampire l'éternelle Luxure  
Sur la grande cité convoite sa pature.**





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## LETTRES À DEUX AMIS.

May 19, 1890.



ACK once more in Florence; here I feel at home again, and this not only from personal associations, but because of the familiar faces of bygone times. I went this morning to the Uffizi to see if old friends were faithful still; Lippo had a kindly smile of welcome, and Botticelli awakened once more the poetry of all the earth.

Spring has gone, but summer too is lovely in Val d'Arno before the heat and dust make the days unbearable; most lovely at evening when the sun has just gone down behind the Apennines, and the air is still warm, and the sky turns blue again in the east and lights up with a purple luminosity, and the hills are quiet and silent, but very full of the unheard pulsation of life. We saw the same effect from *San Pietro*, but then without the warmth of summer in the air. It is one of those effects which almost baffle the painter's skill; Costa and Nono and Millais have a fine appreciation of this hour of the day, but perhaps the most perfect expression of it is given by Robert Browning:—

“At almost eve  
’Tis better, then the silence grows  
To such degree ybu half believe  
She must get rid of what she knows,  
Her bosom does so heave.”



And then in the early morning up the Val d'Arno, past the Gironne and Pontassieve, past Montevarchi and San Giovanni, and then past Arezzo and Trasimeme to a strange new country away from the tramp of ordinary tourists. But whether it was the snow that lay on the mountains, or the chilly lack of that imagination without which nature responds not at all, I cannot tell, but the charms of the Abruzzi remained hidden from me. The hills and valleys are as bare and colourless as some parts of Aberdeenshire, and the great stony Apennines above them are cold and desolate, without the grandeur of the Alps or the Pyrenees.

It is apparently too late to make a successful search for the picturesque. The tourists have beyond recall set their mark on the most beautiful spots in Europe. Have they not occupied the Oberland and the Matterhorn, Chamounix and the Salzkammergut, the Bay of Naples and the Italian lakes, Venice and Florence, Perthshire and the Pyrenees?

*May 25.*

The weather was too bad for the high country, so I came on to Spoleto, hoping from here to reach the mountains of the Sibyl, but in spite of a weary journey to Norcia they were still covered by other hills, and the mist came down again. From Assisi I tried to ascend Monte Subasio, that I might have sight of them at least from a distance, but the weird wind that blows at dawn, with the rushing sound of the Graiæ's wings, brought the mist back once more, and again the Sibyl was hidden. So that, in spite of many journeyings, it was only from Perugia that I saw her again,—a warning to mortals not to approach the god too near.

However, the journey was far from being in vain, for

between Spoleto and Foligno I found a lovely bit of pastoral country. It is the country the Umbrian painters loved as their own, and the less wooded parts of which Perugino, and Pinturricchio, and Lo Spagna used for their backgrounds.

The frescoes mouldering on the damp walls made me very sick at heart ; it seems as though man must not only provide ever anew for his daily material wants, but that the creations of the genius of one age must perish in order that a new race may be compelled to recreate the ideal in another form. But the remnants of the *quattrocentisti* are well worth a visit, and I am now prepared to be your guide another spring to Perugia, within easy reach of which are treasures of which we did not dream when we were there. For Lippo Lippi painted his last picture at Spoleto and died there by poison, so tradition tells ; there is a monument to his memory erected in the cinquecento showing him in the dress of a monk, but I like to believe the story of the pope having absolved him, and his mistress too, from their vows because of his good painting. Well, monk or not, here, when his life was drawing to a close, he painted as the Madonna of the Annunciation her who had been the Madonna of his youth. The fresco is very full of delicate and tender feeling, the Madonna undoubtedly by his hand, although, perhaps even the angel, and certainly the rest of the large frescoes in the chancel, were finished by Fra Diamante after his death.

Like Cimabue and Pinturricchio, and so many of the old painters, Lippo is much greater in fresco than in oils ; you remember Herod and Herodias and Salome at Prato.

At Trevi there is a most beautiful Perugino, a fresco painted in 1521, when he was over seventy, representing the Adoration of the Kings. He too is faithful to his first idea of beauty, and painted her till the end.

I cannot to-day add anything to what I wrote you from Venice about the characteristics of the quattrocento in Tuscany and Umbria. I went back to Assisi to see if that Cimabue still retained its charm, and came away with the same opinion, that Giotto has very unjustly eclipsed the fame of his greater master ; of course Giotto made an enormous stride in the direction of realism, but his realism is so very *goffo* ; his earnestness is no doubt very sincere, but in painting we want design and colour, not merely good thoughts and allegories, and I sometimes see more beauty in those old stiff Madonnas of Cimabue than in the more realistic figures of Giotto. But I do not want to talk about Giotto yet, for his Campanile is witness to his perfect sense of beauty, and the *Soldan* is one of the attractions of my favourite church in Florence ; perhaps, in spite of his love of colour, his genius was that of an architect rather than of a painter ; perhaps much that goes by his name is only, after all, the daub of the restorer. Then at Spello there is a wonderful fresco by Pinturricchio, more beautiful than the gorgeous decorations of the library of Siena ; this too is an Annunciation ; I wonder whether the old painters were attracted to this subject merely by the opportunity it gave them for the simple composition of two figures in graceful attitudes, one of them with the magnificent adornment of wings, or whether they meant to combine with the simple mystic story of the Bible their idea of the first dawn of love in a woman's heart.

At Monte Falco, the *ringhiera dell' Umbria*, there are frescoes by Tiberio d'Assisi, and by others of the Umbrian school, hard to find elsewhere. Monte Falco is to Umbria what San Gimignano *delle belle torri* is to Tuscany, the purest survival of the centuries that have gone. Here too there are a number of frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli, but neither here nor at San

Gemignano, nor at Pisa, is he equal to himself, as we know him in the Riccardi chapel. He too, like all men, great and small, was not always at his best. Man cannot command his own inspiration, any more than he can change the stars in their courses; all he can do is to live sanely, and keep his body and mind, his heart and his imagination, in the most effective state possible to him, that he may best be able to profit by the leaves of the Sibyl when the wind of fortune blows them his way. But a strong man will, after all, have some voice in the councils of Fortune, and will create occasions of good and joy which a weakling will only see to regret as they vanish, or will be too blind to see at all.

Perugia,  
*June 1.*

The anemones and the tulips have gone long ago; in the cloister at Assisi there is not a violet to be found; the poppies now usurp the place of the flowers of Spring. About Spoleto the fields are red with them; if ever you know such a field, get up within two hours of sunrise, and stand and look at it between you and the sun, you will then see a colour which will, I think, be new to you, fit for the garment of Dante's angel, so it glows with light.

To-day is the *Festa dello Stattuo*; how different Italy is now from the Italy of thirty years ago, fermenting then with the desire of national unity, strong in the hope of material and political development, led by the heroic passions of Mazzini and Garibaldi, and the no less heroic councils of Cavour and the King. Now the enthusiasm is gone, and the bronze statues make the squares hideous which once resounded to the living voices of heroes, and the tread of soldiers ready to fight for the freedom of a neighbouring province.

I told you that one characteristic of all great art was simplicity. I tell you to-day that another is repose. Perfect repose is a characteristic of God alone ; man, by the very conditions of his life must be ever striving after something to which he can never completely attain ; but by the manner of this striving is determined the beauty and satisfaction of his life. No life where strength is not based on repose is permanently happy ; no peace is possible, no enthusiasm is prolific of good, except to those whose ways are sane.

I have lately stayed in three of the chief cities of Europe ; the crowded mass of deformed humanity, and the petty individuals pursuing in feverish haste their petty ends,—the mere greatness of size and quantity not adding to the grandeur of the whole, as in a pyramid, or in a Gothic cathedral, or in an Alp, but increasing the oppression of limitation,—the want of character, and the incapacity for thought in these individuals, who follow each other like a flock of sheep, make one feel that, after all, Caliban was right, and that Setebos is of truth a god, and a god good enough for a city. I know that without the competition and keenness of city life we cannot have the sharp wits that Londoners and Parisians are proud of, the capacity for taking in at a glance a smattering of any subject of human knowledge, and judging of and pronouncing on, at a moment's notice, any problem of man or nature. But is this speed so valuable after all ? I know, too, that my shrinking from a crowd and competition may be merely the result of my not being strong enough to keep my feet in their midst. I know that in a weaving shed, where I am deafened by the noise of the looms, and made dizzy by the jerking of the shuttles, the manager walks with all his senses alert ; that in a battle-field, which to me would be wild confusion and full of physical terror, the

general stands, heedless of the noise, and the smoke, and the whiz of bullets, and gives his orders in what to him is no more distracting than a game of chess ; and I am bound to ask if it may not be so with me in the keener and more active life of cities ? Am I not judging them merely as a country lad would judge Regent Street as he stood on one side, unable to cross it from want of custom ? But in the end I answer, No, and my reason is not because of the barbarous luxury of a big city, where man can buy all things except one,—for there are plenty I know of who are untouched by its vulgarity, and a country life is not generally more refined,—but because the fever and the stir of the city deprive many of the brightest and most intelligent among us of that repose and quiet which alone is wanting to make their lives perfect ; and their happiness serene because they lessen the vital force, and by mere jar and rattle take away so much vigour ; because they develop nervous diseases, till few we meet are perfectly sane, and these the less sensitive among us, so that the best part of humanity is most injured, because the bustle and hurry of a city make men more aimlessly like each other, and destroy the play and spirit of individual development ; because, in short, what is good in it is produced at far too great a cost.

It is a far cry from Umbria to Vienna, from the silent beauty of the Cambio to the noisy city of *Wein, Weib und Gesang*. But at times I am driven to ask, rather dismally, What is, after all, the difference between the coarser pleasures of these townsmen and our more refined enjoyment of art and friendship ? Is the difference between a *Fiakerlied* and a symphony of Beethoven, between the enjoyment these people have and that which we derive from the ideals which we have made for ourselves from the Greeks, and from Dante and Shakespeare,

really any greater than the difference between a common dinner claret and a *grand vin* of Bordeaux with its bouquet and its *château* on the cork? But, after all, differences of degree may become differences of kind; a mole-hill and a mountain differ in other respects than in size, although for the purblind each is merely an excrescence on the face of the earth.

With my usual luck of getting emphasis laid where it is not wanted, in Vienna I read Tolstoi's *Kreutzer Sonata*. The idea of the author is true and worth stating, but this Russian novel, like many others, depicts a state of society which we in England have fortunately left behind us; these books are pessimistic too to such a degree, that when written with any literary power they take us for a prolonged walk through asylum and the *Morgue*. Now *la Sainte Chapelle* or the *Bois de Boulogne* are better to walk in than the *Morgue*, and the country is best of all; don't you think so? There is enough of inevitable ugliness and barbarity in our own lives, and in the lives of those we associate with, to supply us with material for a picture of the lower phases of human life, without plodding through lengthy descriptions of the surroundings and analyses of the characters of men who are drunkards, and of women whose nervous balance is upset. I well remember how once, when death in its various forms was very present to me, a book of Tolstoi's acted like the last straw, and made recovery much more difficult. At times, no doubt, he has the power of an enthusiast, but his imagination has been spoiled by the dismal medium in which he has lived.<sup>1</sup> And we who have reached the *mezzo del camin* do not need to begin discussing every

<sup>1</sup> I am not here speaking of the religious and socialistic writings of Tolstoi, in profound admiration of which we are, I think, agreed, and which we will discuss one day.

principle of morality *de novo* ; some of our opinions are open to modifications, but all are not in a state of flux, as they appear to be to many of the novel writers of France and Russia.

Vienna and Paris and London, one after the other, make the same impression on me,—that the price we pay for living in such centres of intellectual activity is too great. I know that there are many strong enough to resist the vulgar current of Mammon and success in society, keeping themselves straight by a warm spring of human affection ; but even these are rendered less happy and their lives less beautiful than they might be by the complete impossibility of repose, by the haste and flurry and the unmeaning fuss of the lives their neighbours lead. It is pleasant, of course, to find a man who is “up” in all that is going on, but everyone cannot be a walking encyclopedia even of current events, and most of us must be content to see rather less than everything that is to be seen, and know less than all the interesting people in society. The inhabitants of towns are apt to forget that the wealth of man, either material or moral, does not consist in the mass or number of his possessions, but in the way he uses them, and that he cannot use them without in some way taking them up into himself. Now in the rush and hurry of daily life in a city most men can assimilate very little, and are reduced to repeat what a hireling press tells them, and, without thinking for themselves, to pass on the remarks of their neighbours at table. Every day is more or less like a schoolboy’s holiday ; he plays one game after another and eats so much cake and so many ices that at the end of it he is almost as stupid as a drunken man. So the townsman ; he cannot see that a ceaseless round of amusement ends by being no amusement at all, and that to have real enjoyment he must exert other faculties than those which go to pro-



duce smart sayings in petty conversation. His miserable fuss and haste spoil his whole life ; if he travels, the mountains and the cities rush by him like the fields and hedges seen through the windows of the "Orient express" ; if he reads, he stumbles through a quantity of reviews, and having thus saved himself the trouble of thinking, ends by losing the very faculty of thought ; his intellectual digestion becomes impaired, till his food is limited to the washy gruel of the "Daily News," or the nauseous gossip of "Truth." There is a vast amount of cleverness and wit of a certain type to be found in these journals, but I doubt whether a daily perusal of the coarsest plays of the Restoration would not be as good mental food ; and the climax of such cuteness is rather well exemplified by a man I know, who, to prepare his son for the battle of life, completed the sharpening of his wits by sending him for two years to a pettifogging solicitor, and for two more to the office of a stockbroker, whose only remaining reputé was for his "cuteness." That lad was "cute" enough at the end of his time, but he was not exactly the companion I should have chosen for my son.

What then shall save us from the bustle and worry which we all agree in deprecating ? Unfortunately such things lie in the nervous system, and in petty habits we have acquired and which are engrained in us. The city man cannot even walk quietly ; the Yankee bolts his dinner ; but as far as intellectual change of attitude affects such habits, it seems to me that the frame of mind difficult to attain, but profitable in the way of repose, is one which, while preserving the keenest interest in what is good in nature and art and society, yet is, in a sense, careless of individual acts and events. It is not the having seen this picture, or heard that concert, or made some parti-

cular acquaintance, that matters as a rule, but the state of mind which renders it possible to take up some advantage from each of these ; the wise man may be content to let many things pass which the fool who runs after happiness rushes at, and catches, to find that they are void.

What we want in this busy century is not more intellectual activity, but more freshness of intellect and vividness of actual feeling ; and, besides these, and as their granitic foundation, a quiet immovable faith in something which shall be to us such a tower of strength as the Christian religion was to many of our ancestors. A faith which makes us brighter and more appreciative of others, and larger of mind, whether its expression is in accordance with verbal logic or not, cannot but be rational, for man is not merely a syllogistic machine ; and there are those things in heaven, and on earth too, which will not fit into the pigeon-holes of the townsman's common sense, nor escape the cynic's witticism. Where shall we find such a faith ? It almost seems as if, nowadays, each must make his own ; and that here, as in the days of old, God will show himself at "sundry times and in divers manners." We can only speak "of that which we do know," and that too only in metaphors, "as in a glass darkly," but surely something remains fixed amid the whirl of an impertinent criticism, which discusses Buddha over its champagne, and social theories over its claret.

Some of us there are who find our peace in art ; not always, it is true, but when we are at our best. And by art, I mean anything which conveys to us the innermost meaning of man and nature embodied in a form appreciable by the senses and the intellect.

Roughly speaking, man's faculties of reception are three :

his sensations, as of heat and cold ; his intellectual capacity of appreciating statements made in words, and inferring consequences from what he takes in through his senses ; and his emotions or power of being acted upon by the will or actions of another man or of nature, expressed it may be in a form of sense or of intellect, but backed by a force which is inexplicable, as derived from one or both of these. Such a faculty has been described sometimes as "faith," sometimes as "reason," using the word in a higher sense than that of the English "rationalists," and including something which they try to analyze away. There are many things which man cannot explain,—the instinct of animals, the formation of hail, the birth of a new individual, the power of mesmerism,—and yet the facts connected with these he does not try to analyze away. Why should we not be content to allow that there are other facts conveyable by art and religion which are not subject to the criticism of the intellect alone? We know that such have had power to move individuals and masses in a way that nothing else has done, and that it is only when the common affairs of daily life are lit up by the gleam of a world beyond,—illusory it may be as a physical reality, but real enough to us at the moment,—that they assume an importance greater than the mere accidents in the life of an ant-hill.

Why should we try to reduce the effect of a symphony or of a picture into the tickling of our ears or eyes by colours and sounds? Does a "solemn music," by affecting our ears, merely give us a pleasure akin to that which a dainty dish gives us by affecting our palate? Does a tragedy of Sophocles contain no element which moves us in a way entirely different to physical pleasure? Are the love-songs of the poets merely the expression of a sensualism which, to suit our

notions of propriety, must hide itself and its desires in subtleties of language? Are the human affections, upon which the family, and through the family the state, is founded, nothing more than a cloak for self-seeking, which some, through a confusion of language, maintain to be the end of each man and woman? We answer, No;—and though we cannot fully explain what this element is, still, to some extent, we do know it, and to deny its reality is as foolish as it would have been to have denied the existence of the old world because the new was not yet fully explored.

*November.*

There are times when this world revealed in art and religion is non-existent for us; we are not completely masters of our fate; and no doubt to some, more than to others, mere bodily condition alters our capacity for faith and joy; at such time we must be careful to adhere to the ideas which have moved us and the theories we have formulated when we were at our best. What is true to one, does not always appear to be true to another, although it might be better for the latter if it were so; and to deny the capacity of man to get up and down stairs because we are ourselves crippled is surely no proof of our faculty for argument.

The difficulty in the bustle and babble of modern life is to trust to anything beyond what we see in the very immediate future. "It's wiser being good than bad" are often to us as empty words as those which tell of the triple unity of the Godhead.

We don't really believe that we can find our happiness by the one method which our observation and our reason have shown us to be efficacious, and instead of this we seek

our satisfaction in countless possessions and amusements, all of which are good if they come in our way, but which are not worth running after. This, however, is not to the point; what we now want to get at is how art and literature give expression to a faith which shall be beyond the reach of the cynicism of our day, and to seek for a set of canons by which in the future to judge whether a picture or a poem is really great by containing this element, or whether it merely attracts us for the moment by some glamour of sound, or colour, or will-o'-the-wisp-like charm of false, because in the highest sense irrational, romance.

Such canons we must seek to derive from the works of the greatest artists and poets of past ages; if we are able to find these, we shall at the same time have found a solution of the antithesis of realism and idealism, and shall have attained to a more accurate notion of what true beauty really is; these, you remember, were two of the questions which we proposed discussing.

Years ago I had thought to approach these questions through some formulated system of philosophy; now the way appears to me to lie differently; by a study of the great works of art and literature we must compel them to show us the secrets of their magic, and at the same time to provide us with a touchstone which shall enable us to tell the true from the false gold in the works of our time.

I think in our inquiry we had better leave on one side most criticism, and go to the fountain-head with whatever character and culture our education has given us, and all the good feeling that our nature is capable of. We shall in this way run less risk of merely repeating opinions which we neither know nor feel to be true, and whatever we

win from the great masters will at least be our own, and remain with us. Let us take in literature only those authors whose position the wide world acknowledges; afterwards we can apply to those nearer our own day the canons we derive from these their forerunners.

By the opinion of all the civilized world the Greek and Latin literatures stand pre-eminent for some qualities which in modern times are more difficult to attain. In some ways we may be greater than they; our music, for instance, shows perhaps an advance on theirs; our fellow-feeling for others may have placed us on a higher level of more refined morality; but in the expression of thought and emotion in verse and prose it can hardly be maintained that we have surpassed them. We shall therefore begin with the ancients, and of them Homer obviously occupies the foremost place; after him, of the Greeks, Æschylus and Sophocles, and of the Romans, Lucretius and Virgil. The next will be Dante, though with him we shall have to confine ourselves to those parts of his poems which bear a plain and literal meaning, for there is this difference between Dante and Homer: when we know the value of the words used by the latter we know his meaning too, it is on the surface; but not so with Dante, for with him the obscurity of the dark ages, from which he emerged, leave their trace, and in spite of his own axiom that a poem must first have a literal meaning, and then an allegorical, we find that his chief object was at times the allegory.

Next, our own Shakespeare; and, although of less weight, of the French, Corneille, with Molière and Racine; and of the Germans, Goethe.

In music, Bach, Haydn, and Mozart stand unchallenged.

In sculpture we will take the Greeks of the time of Pericles, the Tuscans of the time of Donatello, and Michel Angelo, for our guides. In painting there is not the same accordance of opinion; our fathers admired Carlo Dolce, the Caracci, and Guido Reni; we prefer the quattrocento. Perhaps we shall be safe if we take Raphael in his earlier time and the chief masters of the fifteenth century in Umbria and Tuscany, and from the North, Van Eyck, Memling, and Holbein. If we have to refer to architecture, our standard shall be the Greek temples and the early French Gothic cathedrals, and of domestic buildings the early French Renaissance, and the Tudor and Elizabethan houses of England. The great beauty of all that I have mentioned is, I think, acknowledged by the civilized world. In literature, however, we will begin with Dante, and then return to the Greeks.





III.

DANTE.

Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete.









## DANTE.

*November 25, 1890.*



SEND you with this some notes which I have made to the last few cantos of Dante's *Purgatory*. The object of them is to enable anyone who can already read modern Italian to read Dante also. There is nothing original about them. I have merely abbreviated what I thought necessary from various commentaries.

All poetry has its difficulties; to some it is a shut book; but even to those who are in sympathy with his spirit, the poet does not always speak clearly; he is a "seer," and sees nature and man in a different light from that under which we commonly regard them; his eyes pierce further through the gloom which obscures their true reality from most of us, and it is difficult to follow him through a country new to us. To express what he sees he requires a larger vocabulary than we are accustomed to use, and words and phrases which are strange to our ears prevent our following his meaning with the same rapidity with which we can follow that of a writer for the newspapers, who uses our own jargon.

The difficulty of interpreting poetry arises primarily from the fact that through his art the poet expresses, by means of words and phrases, something more than these signify when

separated from the whole composition and dissected under the microscope of ordinary criticism. According to the materialist, the poet produces an illusion ; he arouses an excitement in the minds of his readers which renders them for the moment free from the rules of "common sense" ; he inebriates them by his music and his rhythm, as it might be by the aroma and sparkle of champagne, and causes them for a time to forget the limitation of their surroundings, and to fancy that they have wings wherewith to fly. The idealist, on the other hand, believes in the reality of a world which remains when this earth fades away and these heavens crumple up like a scroll that is burned in the fire, a world which can never be fully known to us, but only partly apprehended through forms of sense, and revealed dimly in the surroundings of our everyday life, in which, however, more direct flashes are revealed at times by a poet or a prophet,—“in Vishnu land what Avatar ?”

According to such an one, the poet's faculty is to express, by means of language, that which he knows of the relations of the world of Ideas, or of God, or by whatever name we are accustomed to call that life which is partly obscured from, and partly revealed to us, by the veil of the sensible universe ; and it is just in so far as he goes beyond the mere scientific or logical use of words that he makes his meaning plain. You dissect his sentences as you dissect a frog, and when you have done, the spirit of life is no longer there ; something has gone which was in a way dependent on the dry bones you have left with you, which no examination of those dry bones will reveal, but of which it is mere folly to deny the existence. Now, it is not every one who is capable of feeling the poetry of a given author, any more than it is every

one who cares for the music of Schumann or for the colour of the Venetian painters; moreover there are some to whom poetry does not speak at all, just as there are others who in a lovely landscape see only so many acres of corn and meadow. Now to these you cannot explain a poet's meaning.

In the case of a poet so many centuries removed from us as Dante, the difficulties are greater, inasmuch as each age has its own current coin in ways of thought, and even in mannerisms of poetic expression; it requires, too, not only more culture, but more imagination, to put ourselves in the place of Farinata degli Uberti, or of Dante himself, than it does in the case of Faust.

Every generation has a literary slang of its own, and each writer, or group of writers, his own mannerisms; but the mannerisms of a great man, or of a great period, are not necessarily the outcome of affectation. Sometimes they express the association of ideas then joined together, but of which it is difficult for us to see the connection. As the mathematician or the chemist often uses signs for the sake of conciseness, so the writer may call up by certain turns of expression, well known to the readers of his day, a series of feelings or ideas which are suitable to the general effect of what he is saying, and so long as he really feels what he suggests, and this suggestion is to the point, we cannot complain of his mannerism. It is when such expressions are used without being backed up by feeling, but merely because they were pretty or forcible when used by a predecessor, that they become tiresome.

Now the mannerisms of the Italian *trecento* do not call up in our minds the ideas which they did in a refined Italian of that time; the phrases *il Signor amore, donna gentile*, the

references to the Church, the Papacy, the Empire, to the terms of scholastic philosophy, to Heaven, to Hell, and the Mount of God, to the legends of the Saints, to the visions of the Old and New Testaments, the reminiscences of the language of Virgil and Ovid, all meant something directly to him, which it takes an effort for us to realize.

Similar difficulties beset those who would read Homer or the Greek dramatists; their way of regarding Nature and Man is so far removed from our own. To one who knew nothing of the gods of Greece there would be not only incomprehensible allusions in the Homeric poems, but, the spirit of their religion being unfelt, that background would be unseen, peopled by the dwellers in Olympus, "where, as they say, is the seat of the gods that standeth fast for ever. Not by winds is it shaken, nor ever wet with rain, nor doth the snow come nigh thereto; but most clear air is spread about it cloudless, and white light floats over it. Therein the blessed gods are glad for all their days" (*Odyssey*, vi. 41).<sup>1</sup>

Even to those of us who have studied the art and literature of Greece, it is impossible to see what the Greeks saw, except at rare moments, when, under the influence of some supreme work of poetry or art, we are carried for the time out of ourselves and our surroundings. Of course there is an eternal element of kindred emotion underlying all art and all religion, but the difference of expression sometimes overbalances this, and we should find it hard to make John Knox and Botticelli friends if they met in the Elysian fields. To many of us this difference is very conspicuous in approaching such a man as Dante, and some who come to him for the first time are repelled for ever by the scaly coat of scholasticism in which

<sup>1</sup> Butcher and Lang's translation.

he sometimes wraps his figures. He lived at a time when a belief in what we call "historical" Christianity was still alive. To him the doctrines of the Church, and the words of the Bible and of the Fathers, are sacred in a way that we find it difficult to understand. To him Heaven and Hell and Purgatory were no mere allegory. Between him and us lies the Renaissance, with its revival of the ancient pagan spirit, and the Revolution, which has swept away the barriers of authority and tradition. In the commentary we have talked of, of which I have sent you the mere rough beginning, I should not try to illustrate Italian history of the time of Dante, nor the ways of scholastic philosophy, with its attempt to adapt the phraseology of Aristotle to the doctrines of the Christian Church, nor to explain the early development of Italian into a literary language; nor should I give a list of all the various readings of the MSS., or of all the more or less acute emendations of ancient and modern critics, nor register all the allegorical meanings which the commentators have suggested. The attainment of one or all of these objects would render the notes too lengthy to be useful to the reader who goes to Dante simply because he is a poet. I should merely add to the text such notes as I think will make the poetry of Dante more accessible to an ordinarily cultivated English reader, somewhat acquainted with modern Italian, and not destitute of imagination.

And when I say that I should keep Dante the poet in view rather than the politician, or the theologian, or the chief founder of the literary language of Italy, I must not be understood to suggest that poetry walks with its head in the clouds and its feet nowhere. Dante and Homer and Shakespeare all move with their feet on the solid earth, and only through the

reality of their conceptions, and the truth of their pictures, a truth greater than that of ordinary history, or of science,—for poetry, said Aristotle, is more truthful than history,—have they maintained their hold on men, and avoided the charge of being mere visionaries, which is so easily maintained against poets of lesser genius.

As an aid to the first reading of the *Commedia*, I should recommend an English translation,—that in prose by Carlyle for the *Inferno* (Chapman and Hall, 1867), with the continuation by Arthur Butler. As an introduction there is none in English better than Dean Church's Essay, republished in *Dante, and other Essays* (Macmillan, 1888), or in Italian than the *Saggi critici* of de Sanctis; Scartazzini's *La Divina Commedia* (Brockhaus, Leipzig, 1890, of which volume iv. can be bought separately, containing *Prolegomeni della Divina Commedia*) gives a good deal of badly digested information. To assist us to go back to the thirteenth century, and to bring us nearer to the poet and his time, better than all essays and commentaries is the reading of the old Chronicles of Dino Compagni and of Giovanni Villani; and the keeping our eyes wide open to the architecture of Arnolfo and Orcagna, to the remains of the old houses and castles and towers and churches of the Valdarno and Tuscany of the thirteenth century, to the fragments of painting still remaining of Cimabue and Giotto, and to the sculpture of the early Pisans. These still reach a hand back to that old time of sterner life and simpler ways so wonderfully described by Dante (*Paradiso*, xv. 98), and of which he was himself one of the last survivals. Already, by the middle of the fourteenth century, the spirit of the age is very different. Boccaccio and Petrarch belong to a generation less stern and less natural; the Renaissance has already begun

to modify ways of thought and forms of expression, and has started that vain search for the beautiful which produced much that is exquisitely refined, but which, to some extent, substituting finish for good material, in literature as in architecture, leaves our hearts cold and our enthusiasm unstirred.

Painting and sculpture had a different development ; Jacopo della Quercia and Donatello were born about the time that Boccaccio and Petrarch died, and Benozzo Gozzoli and Ghirlandajo were contemporaries of the polished trifling of Politian and of Pico della Mirandola. Literature had degenerated into *belles lettres*, and cynicism, with the affectation of sentiment, had taken the place of the earnest thought and glowing enthusiasm of the earlier time. (See de Sanctis' *Storia della letteratura Italiana*, vol. i. c. 2.)

The roughness and occasional clumsiness which we find in Dante are not such a bar to the artistic expression of his thoughts as is the want of skill in drawing in the case of Cimabue or Giotto. For the imperfect phrases and harsh sounds which we find here and there in the *Commedia* are more than counterbalanced by the lines where thought and expression fit each other as they are only made to do by the greatest masters of language. We see that Cimabue and Giotto had much to express, nay, we can even decipher their meaning here and there, but they remain to most of us, who will be honest with ourselves, great men rather than great painters.<sup>1</sup> Not so Dante ; in him the greatness of the man is often equalled by the power of poetic expression. There is at times in his language a sculpturesque feeling and a Titanic power of direct effect such as none of the more polished

<sup>1</sup> Each one will, perhaps, find in his memory some fresco where the master's power of expression is less inadequate to his thoughts.



writers of the next centuries ever attained, and which of all the artists of his country Michel Angelo alone shared. No doubt this power was partly due to the language he was using, for in the parent Latin,<sup>1</sup> especially as written by Virgil and by Lucretius, we are moved by the same charm. It is difficult to explain this to one who does not feel it. It is not only the accurate coincidence of thought and language, the subtle fitness in the words, and the grammatical nicety of period; there are languages which, when used by a master, can be majestic or tender, joyful or melancholy, to a degree impossible to an equal master in another tongue.

You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Michel Angelo himself could not have made a wooden statue speak as he did the marble in San Lorenzo; Liszt could not make a piano give out the music of a violin; and if France or Germany could produce a poet of equal temper with Dante, he would still be inferior to the Italian, who would remain supreme owing to the capabilities of his language for melodious sound and for rhythmical movement. But to admit the superiority of early Italian as a vehicle for poetry is no derogation from the consummate genius of Dante, for it was he, more than any other, who made the vulgar language of Tuscany capable of literary expression.

<sup>1</sup> Siccome per esso altissimi e novissimi concetti convenevolmente sufficientemente ed acconciamente quasi per esso Latino si esprimono. *Convivio*.



IV.

WORK.

Vincendo me col lume d'un sorriso  
Elle mi disse : Volgiti ed ascolta  
Chè non pur ne' miei occhi è paradiso.

Il faut user par le travail ce qui nous oppresse.





## WORK.

Florence,

*April, 1891.*



YOU may smile, but our "convent" shall not be a mere *Château d'Espagne*. I know not whether Fortune will allow that those four who talked on the hill shall ever join its foundation; perhaps even this may be possible, the future is in the hands of God; but one thing I know, that you and I, before many years are past, shall start some rational life of our own, and through that life we shall form around us a community, it may be only of two or three, and those not under the same roof, whose lives shall be happy and reasonable because of the reason and happiness of our own.

The idea of doing something useful, and living a life healthy in body and thought and emotion, is no new one; but custom and the weight of the weary "world" hinders most of us in its realization. Some time or other, if a man would live, and not to all practical purposes die, he must look facts in the face, and go down to the depths to find out on what foundation he really stands. Many do this in thought and words, but their analysis is cleverer than their will is strong. Shall this be so with us too? Thoughts may be great and noble and true, emotions may be holy and powerful and passionate, but unless



they issue in action they are as little worth as the "sentiments" of an artificial literature.

How then can we act, not man in general,—that will come later,—but we, here, who sat and talked "sentiment" together on the hill, and have each of us done so many a time in the past? Let us know what is good and true and healthy and helpful in life, and let us follow this, in defiance of the opinion of our neighbours. We are none of us so stupid or so blunted by custom and the ways of "the world" but that we know right from wrong; we have none of us such corrupt natures that we cannot trust our impulses, at least when we are at our best. The great thoughts and the great examples of the true heroes and sages of the world are open to us to see and to understand. The excuse of most of us, that our surroundings do not admit of our acting up to what we know to be true, does not hold throughout. If, in order to spare sorrow and anxiety to those dear to us, we go not entirely our own way, let us remember that their happiness does not always consist in that in which they think it does; that a *fait accompli* is not so appalling to most people as the chimæra of their own creation which they are apt to associate with any change; that the future depends on us. Merely for our own short-lived pleasure we dare not sacrifice the comfort and happiness of others, but for those whose lives, in coming ages, depend on how we live now, we must not be hindered by comparatively petty considerations from following what we know in nature to be right. We can trust ourselves to do nothing base, nothing which shall degrade ourselves; let us be sure that in the end those who really care for us will come to see that we have acted rightly; it is only by our own happiness and content and peace that we can give the same to them, or to

others. Man owes one debt to those who have given him birth and tended his helpless years, he owes another to those who are to come after him, be they his own children, or the unknown generations who are yet unborn.

Let us grant then, for the moment, that each of us is free to go his own way,—and to some extent this is true,—what shall we do?

Two things are obvious: first, that man cannot live alone, that there is strength in unity, and that in place of the form of so-called “society,” which we despise, we shall require some other human intercourse; the second is that man cannot run fast enough to catch happiness by pursuing it, happiness must come as the bloom comes on a peach; he must, therefore, have an occupation for his time, and in the satisfaction of doing his work well earn a good digestion and a smiling countenance. A shoemaker who is fond of his work is happier than a Rothschild who is fond of his possessions. These things we agree upon; let us act up to our agreement, if possible, in community, which shall be a strength to us all. When I was twenty, imbued with the republican and socialistic theories of Mill and Mazzini and others, I wanted to learn the business of our country-side, and to become in time the head of the factories which our family possessed in those days in Yorkshire, with a view to the gradual introduction of real co-operation; I suppose that I was only half-hearted about it, and the dissuasions of my friends were sufficient to nullify my desire for what was good, and so I went neither their way nor mine, nor any way at all. *Now* I think not of such large beginnings, but of quietly finding out something which I shall be capable of doing as an individual, trusting that when I am master of that, I shall not fail to gather one or two round me.



In the community we spoke of,—I do not mean the temporary one of this summer, which has proved impossible,—there will be room for all kinds of work; you talked as if you thought the scheme might fail from degenerating into dilettante art and learned leisure. No; you have your painting, that is work enough for you; another may have his music; but to others, such as myself, who have no particular artistic or literary faculty, simpler crafts are still open. We shall want clothes. Why should not the women spin the yarn, and the men weave the cloth? Such work, done on hand machines, and not for too many hours in the day, has nothing degrading in it, and would be a delightful occupation to those whose nerves are overstrung by the irrational life they have hitherto been leading. In a small way, there is nothing so rest-giving as mechanical work. You painters shall grind your own colours!

Furniture will be wanted; some will make this. The community must earn its food and raiment, and to this end will want to sell part of its produce. Consider the future of the arts when wood, and wool and brass and leather are worked into shapes, no longer by machines, and by workmen who are as mechanical as, and only more slovenly than, the machines themselves, but by men and women imbued with all that the culture of past ages and the beauty of living nature has shown them. Then will arise, without the folly of "art-schools," such a living art as the world has not yet seen; then ornament will not be a mere addition glued to the articles of manufacture, but something organic with them; then, again, once more will be possible such beauty in the minor arts as we find in the old Greek vases, in the Etruscan jewelry, in the pottery and the carpets of

Persia. Among the few examples of really living arts of to-day let me ask you to examine the textile fabrics and the furniture of Mr. William Morris, and the pottery of Mr. de Morgan. Almost all other makers, even of well-finished articles, do their best when they slavishly adapt some Renaissance, or Gothic, or Eastern design ; when they desert their patterns they are helpless and inane ; but these two masters express in design the highest life and feeling of to-day as far as their various materials permit of such expression. Pure, healthy lives will make us to care for pure colour, that our home shall be gay once more ; *now* many people can only bear low, almost neutral tints, and few indeed can now design in bright ones without failing to harmonize them.

*Now*, in order to have anything good made in stuff, or in hard material, we must seek out an artist to provide us with a design, and then a workman to carry it out as mechanically as possible, because we know that if he puts any of his coarser self into it he will spoil it. *Then*, art will again be in the fingers of the craftsmen, and although all will not be great designers, all will have a feeling for great beauty of design. There are many who, like myself, have a keen appreciation of literature and painting and music, but are without any creative power at all ; for us, too, in the humbler arts there will be found a place, and our work will be more beautiful from the help and ideas of the artists among us ; we shall not be ashamed to make tweeds and tables.

I look upon a farm attached to our "convent" as a necessity, for, as you have rightly remarked, health of emotion and of thought pre-supposes bodily health ; and although outdoor games, and sports, and riding, will still be delightful



pleasures to us, all men and women should, I think, do daily some manual out-door labour for the good of their bodies, and for the due preservation of touch with nature and simplicity of life.

As to the amount of land to be cultivated and the various crafts to be exercised, much would depend upon locality and other circumstances. In founding our "convent" we must not seek for difficulties, but try to avoid them. Our aim must not be, at the first, to found an ideal republic. Plenty of difficulties there will always be, supplied by our own weaknesses. We must choose a bright, healthy climate, where the surroundings of men and nature will not hamper us; I think in the New World, but I am open to conviction. Of arts and crafts I would suggest the following: we want to do not any sort of work, but chiefly work in which culture and refinement are an advantage, and which cannot be so well done by boors; and although we will do simple manual labour when necessary,—and it is necessary to us all for our own sakes,—we will rather spend our energy in those crafts in which our culture and experience give us an advantage. I suggest the following:—

Painting (including engraving).

Sculpture (including the chiselling of metal and enamel work).

Music (our musician must earn something in his three months' holiday, and must receive a salary from the rest for the music he provides us with).

Literature (our writer must have a salary for doing our criticism for us; he must keep us informed of all that is good in modern literature, and save us the trouble and waste of time entailed in reading heaps of worthless reviews and

books for ourselves ; he will also have to report to us of the political and social movements of the world).

Carpentry and cabinet-making.

Wood-carving.

Leather-work and book-binding.

Hand-work in brass and iron.

Pottery (at any rate the rougher ware, and if clay permits, then the finer ware too).

Spinning, and weaving our own cloth, and such finer fabrics as may be made by hand as well as they can be by machines. (Cloth-making is still a house industry on the west coast of Scotland ; velvet is woven in small houses at Zoagli ; silk and linen fabrics can be made at home.)

Farming, and gardening, and forestry, would be exercised in part by all members of the community ; of course, as the community grows, it may be desirable to have a special forester, or farmer, amongst its members ; no fear but that one would willingly undertake such work, but at first we shall not have more land than sufficient to supply ourselves with all that we want of the fruits of the earth.

The community would have a common house, to form a nucleus, but affiliated members could live at any distance, obeying, of course, certain simple laws of life and work ; probably married people should have houses of their own near the central home, and free access to the latter. In the common house each member would have a sleeping room, and one in which to exercise his profession and to be alone ; work might more conveniently be done together in some cases, but we want to preserve, not to suppress individuality. Besides these rooms, there would be, for common use, a refectory, a meeting-room for quiet with books, and one

for amusement with a piano and an organ; or the refectory could quite well be used for music. Each member would keep his own room tidy; the common rooms would be kept tidy by the women in turn, and the outside premises by the men. In the common house there would be two simple meals at fixed hours. At all other times there would be refreshment, such as milk, bread, eggs, obtainable.

As I said before, we cannot aim at an ideal republic, and therefore shall not hesitate to use hired labour to a limited extent. Possibly a woman to help in-doors, and a man out-of-doors, is all that we should need.

If one of the members should undertake the cooking, or the gardening, or the management of the accounts, or the farm, he would be generously paid from the common fund, in order that he might be helped to make up his income.

As to the marriage of members: there would be but two restrictions,—they must be able to support children before producing them, and they must not marry if affected by serious hereditary disease.

The rules and condition of membership must be very simple and expansive; but I am not thinking of a large establishment to start with; six or eight, at most; when they have proved each other and themselves, let them each introduce one, if they will, and so on; this would form the inner order; outside would be affiliated members working in harmony in different parts of the world, but having no part in the common home, except, perhaps, occasionally as visitors. The chief rule to be that every man and woman must earn twelve shillings<sup>1</sup> a week

<sup>1</sup> In this and the following remarks about the cost of living, I am thinking of European value. Of course twelve shillings a week does not make £120 a year, and I am quite prepared to admit that our scheme is the result of a compromise.

by daily work, throughout nine months of the year, within certain hours of the day. Our work should be worth sixpence an hour ; this besides the work on the farm, for each member must also do some manual out-door work ; each member must spend three months, or shall we say two months, the third optional, quite away from the community.

As to the cost of life : I am supposing that, to start with, all of us who join either have, or can earn, £120 a year. I know that our society is not ideally perfect unless we can admit all mankind ; but for the present we are thinking of a very select few, and their lives, and are not attempting to reform the whole world. You cannot take the kingdom of Heaven by force.

I think that the sum mentioned will cover all expenses ; half of it will pay for rent and food, the other half for the individual's own vagaries and his two months away. For those who have more than this, or can earn more, so much the better. They will not spend their money foolishly, and they may, some day, help to extend the benefits of the community by making it possible for others to join it. For instance, if there is anyone fit to join the community, but incapable, as yet, of a craft, they can give him the means of learning his trade till he can earn the requisite sum for the community. Those who make beyond the £120 a year, will be taxed at ten per cent. of their income for the benefit of the community, whose funds will be administered by a paid manager, one of a committee of three, who, of course, has his own work besides.

Political economy will become to us, at least, a very simple science.

The cost of living may be covered by £85 a year, of which I should apportion £25 to rent, and £60 to food and sundries. Expenses may be reckoned as follows, per day :—

Meat ( $\frac{1}{4}$ lb.) . . . . .	0 9
Milk . . . . .	0 3
Bread . . . . .	0 2
Vegetables . . . . .	0 1
Tea or substitute . . . . .	0 2
<sup>1</sup> Servant, out-door. . . . .	0 3
<sup>1</sup> Servant, in-door . . . . .	0 3
<sup>1</sup> Cook . . . . .	0 3
Firing . . . . .	0 4
Sundries . . . . .	0 6
	<hr/>
	3 0

Three shillings per day gives us for ten months, roundly, £50; clothing we may reckon at £25 per annum, rent at £25, and the two months away can be covered by £20, if necessary; in all £120. Those who have more can spend more, but this sum is sufficient, at a pinch; I am taking ten members as the basis of calculation. Our garden and farm, worked by ourselves, will give us such profit as will pay for State taxes and for repairs. The taxation of our richer members will gradually furnish us with a fund wherewith to meet emergencies. As to rent, a labourer's cottage can be had for £8 per annum, containing a kitchen, living-room, and two small bed-rooms above. Taking this three times over for each member, should surely provide us with sufficient accommodation for each, and for our public rooms, and also cover furniture of a simple kind.

Work should be done before a certain hour of the day, say

<sup>1</sup> Threepence a day paid by each of ten members amounts to £45 a year.

four o'clock; after that we shall amuse ourselves probably without "Halma." The evenings will not be long; we shall live mostly by daylight. One day of the week shall be a day of rest from work; this is an excellent institution of the Jewish lawgiver. If an artist is full of enthusiasm for his picture, or a musician for his composition, he shall not be made to leave it because it is the day of rest, but shall have exemption from the rule.

While at work, we shall, for our own sakes, wear very simple garments; when work is done, all beautiful stuffs will be allowed to those who can afford them, and who care to wear them. There is no danger in this, for it is not the richness of dress that makes its beauty; and we are not ascetics for the sake of asceticism, but for the sake of fuller life.

As to the expulsion of members no longer suitable to the community, a committee of three should decide; but I think it will be found that, the community not being a wealthy one, those who seek luxury and wealth will of their own accord go elsewhere. As to property, there will be a common fund, but beyond this each will own his own.

In religion each will be unhindered in his own form of it; but we will have no missionaries among us, and no priests. Each man must, in the end, stand or fall by his own merits; none can bear the innermost burden of another. In order to be capable of the strongest personal passion, in order to appreciate to the full the beauty and good that is in nature and in the heart of man, who is but a part of larger nature, we have need of a faith in something greater than our own personality, and the expression of this faith in divers manners, and the signs of it,—to one in the voice of the birds of spring, to another in the thunder of the heavens,—is religion. Let each

be glad that he is capable of such a feeling, and rejoice that his neighbour is capable of it too, even if in a different way.

In time we shall have the education of children to look after. This will be very simple, if we are all living lives healthy in body and mind. Children learn more by example and association than by precept. The amount of education by books will be much smaller than is now required, for we wish our children to have healthy, active bodies, and bright, intelligent minds, to be able to appreciate all that is beautiful in nature and art; now, all that is to a high degree beautiful is simple. We want them to live lives uninterrupted by the breaks of continuity which have so weakened our own; and when their work is done, to die in the assurance that their day of life has been good, and that those who come after can wholly bless their memory. Perhaps, in time, our children may even acquire a faith in some Heaven which is closed to us, and may live and die more happily than we can.

As to education, we shall discuss this together. See Plato's Republic in Jowett's translation, and the Essay by Mr. R. L. Nettleship on *The Education of Plato*; see also Locke on *The Human Understanding*. One modern and one ancient language; the elements of one science; reading and writing, and simple arithmetic, of course: history would naturally interest all, especially the history of their own forefathers.

As to the surrender of the "convent" for this summer, which has once more shattered on the rock of social conventions, as hollow and as useless to some of us as the dry bones of the religion that supports them, and whose chattering sound is already frightening "the world," let us not be disheartened. It was to have been a preparation and a practice for a more comprehensive scheme; let each of us now make it our object

to meet after a year, and to bring to the aid of our scheme what we can, by inquiry and work and contemplation, acquire in the mean time.

Let us, as soon as may be, begin to live, each one of us separately, as if we were in the "convent," and according to its rules ; following only what we know to be good and healthy, regardless of the opinions of "society," working each of us at whatever art or craft we think we may be able to gain the mastership in.

There is a harmony and co-operation which is independent of material facts : "when three men stand together," be their places of rest and of work in three continents, "the kingdoms are less by three" : and the two or three, or five or six, who are to start our community can be gathered together in spirit, when not in body, and in the faith that the God whom they worship will not forsake them if they will only be true to themselves.

And now let us advance : "Coraggio ed avanti." Let us no longer look to the past and try to live amid a world of beauty which we half galvanize into life from the Renaissance, or the Middle Ages, or the East.

*We* have seen visions lovelier than the "Spring" of Botticelli ; let us make our lives more beautiful than those of our fathers. We must live in the future, not in the past. We must no longer build ruins in the corners of our garden and call them picturesque. Only that is alive which has in it the possibility of development and progress. Not in vain, sentimental longing for the simple happy times which we imagine to have been when the world was young, but in the confidence that the golden age lies ahead of us, and that the apples of the Hesperides are yet ours to pluck ; let us set our shoulder to the



wheel, knowing that, if it crushes us, our blood shall water the earth and our bones manure the soil with far other fruit than if we were crushed in the mill of the mammon of luxury and cynicism and sloth.

Let Childe Roland and Parnival be our saints, and let us not forget the wise Wanderer of old Greece who was a carpenter in his own house, nor the weaving of that heroic wife who awaited his return.

P.S. The above is spoken from the point of view of the individual who desires a fuller life. But the individual can only attain to his best development in a society which is healthy. Now a society is not healthy which is composed of a few rich idlers, a few rich workers, many of whom do useless work, and a great many poor, whose sole aim is, after satisfying the daily needs of the body, to get into a richer class. "Tout le rêve de la démocratie est d'élever le prolétaire au niveau de bêtise du bourgeois." The only rational solution of the social problems of our time is the same which will give to the individual a fuller life, and is to be found in this: that each should do the work he is best fitted for; that all work well done deserves honour; that no work which a rational being would demand of another, if well done, can be menial. "The tools to him who can handle them" now expresses a wider meaning than it did, even fifty years ago. If all worked there would be less waste, for the rich now have to find an occupation in spending their money on mostly useless articles, whose only purpose is to show how rich they are. If every one did some useful work, it would be found that we should require very few to do head-work in the various professions; lawyers and journalists, for instance, would be almost superfluous. Let us add to this double saving which would arise from the profitable

employment of those who are now idle, and those who are irrationally employed, that other saving which would accrue from the organization of labour, and the abolition of the waste due to competition, and yet that other saving due to the well-finished trumpery of Bond Street being no longer required, and we can see how the nation might then be more prosperous than now. Consider the waste of labour incurred in providing men with such things as silk hats, and women with the elaborately-finished equipages bright with varnish and silk which are among the more preposterous products of our ridiculous age.

Consider, too, how the health of the race might improve when men and women, who are now run to seed from a too nervous life, and the pursuit of a low form of intellectual cleverness, at the cost of all vigour and freshness, should regain their balance, and a healthy body should once more be the house for a reasonable soul. We shall thus be healthier, and, as a whole, richer, and with the increase of health and reason we may trust to the maintenance of a better balance than is now possible between the number of the population and the country which has to support it.

We have talked above of hand-work. Let me add one word on machines. In the higher crafts machines cannot compete with men, because machines lack the play of character the reflection of which gives the charm to the best manual work ; and even in some of the simpler crafts, such as the manufacture of beautiful carpets, or even of rough homespun tweeds, the human hand is still more efficacious than any machine ; there are, however, some trades in which unassisted manual labour cannot compete with elaborate machinery ; and others in which, by using machines, man is enabled to produce such

articles as would defy his unaided power. To the first of these belongs cotton-spinning. Now, for the production of cotton yarn machines are useful, we must therefore accept them, taking care, however, that those who work with them are not thereby crippled, as so often happens at present. To avoid this, shorter hours for those who work with machinery are necessary, and the absolute refusal of the public to buy goods which are produced under conditions fatal to the health of the workers. This refusal would be naturally and directly given when labour is reasonably organized, and the system is abolished under which man submits to the tyrannical rule of the brutal despot, competition, whom he himself has set up. One man should not attend all day long to a spinning mule, but should be able to vary his work for part of his hours of labour, his place being taken by another who had been doing different work.





V.

“MODERN PAINTERS.”

O vis superba formæ.





## "MODERN PAINTERS."

July, 1891.



THE questions which we were last year led to ask as to the nature of beauty, and as to the sense in which the ideal is a living reality, have been treated of more or less directly by Mr. Ruskin in *Modern Painters*. I propose, therefore, to gather together the scattered fragments of his theory, and to get what help we can from them. Perhaps it will be well afterwards to make a like attempt with Plato, and with Hegel. Last year I thought that we should try to formulate canons for ourselves from those works of art and literature which by universal consent have taken their place as classical ; but we may be wiser to demand what assistance we may get directly from these three, from the influence of whose thoughts we cannot withdraw ourselves, even if we would.

The foundation stone of Mr. Ruskin's theory of the expression of modern painting, and of whatever is worth preserving of ancient art, is that oft-repeated saying of Aristotle, that poetry is truer than history,—that poetry and art express deeper truths about man and nature than are perceived by ordinary observation, or gathered together and classified by science, which is only the better ordered presentation of the same. Common observation and science see the exterior

only, and the facts of material life, which few fail to recognize, while the poet and the artist penetrate deeper, and finding in man a spiritual force, give due prominence to its manifestation in diverse manners in this "sensible" world, in the midst of which, or nowhere, man must find his life.

In discussing these questions, although it is desirable sometimes to talk of the spiritual part of man as opposed to his more exterior physical life, we must remember that in nature this hard and fast distinction does not exist, but that in reality the one passes into the other by infinite gradation, and that one of the central doctrines of the founder of Christianity, as of the greatest modern thinkers, is of the immanence of God in man, the harmony, ever more complete as man rises toward heaven, between the body and the spirit, which are to the mind as inseparable as a house and its human inhabitants are inseparable in the conception of "home."

Mr. Ruskin gives us considerable assistance towards the solution of our difficulty with respect to "the Ideal," and in regard to the nature of mere "Beauty" we shall find valuable hints scattered up and down his book, although to the formulation of a system he helps us less than might be, owing to the reaction which his chapters show against the technical verbosity of German metaphysicians, whose system is often dearer to them than truth itself. And yet criticism is a science, and must justify and prove the truth of the hypothesis, on which it starts, by means of a systematic and careful use of words. The old difficulty, however, presents itself once more to us, that in criticism of works produced by the inspiration of religion or art, words have to be used about facts of nature which can only be expressed by words made red in the fire of enthusiasm. Let us take a concrete instance :

we are constantly using the words *life* and *death*; but if we pause for a moment, we shall be astonished at the difficulty we find in attaching a definite meaning to them, and most of us will soon pass on, regardless of greater accuracy, to the very practical conclusion that life is made up of facts, not of definitions, and that to live is better than to speculate on the meaning of life; and so, perhaps, it is with criticism, it would be better worth while to write a play like the *Antigone* of Sophocles than all the criticism that has appeared on the drama of the Greeks. But though criticism may be a disease of our time, we, belonging to our time, are subject to it; and just now a book like Mr. Ruskin's, setting some order in our thoughts about art, is indeed profitable.

Mr. Ruskin's big book was begun, as we know, with the object of defending Turner against his critics; "because I knew that Turner was right and true, and that his critics were wrong and false and base"; and the method adopted was to show that Turner was true to nature, that is, that he used his eyes and painted what he saw; and secondly, that, since no painter can represent on canvas *all* the facts he sees, the ones chosen for expression by Turner were the most important to man of those displayed by the objects of earth, and sea, and sky.

And so we find that while art is great only as it truly represents facts, a great painter is far from being merely a clever imitator of those external qualities of objects which first strike, and as a rule fully occupy, the vulgar eye; and we arrive at the conclusion that his function is the same as that of the poet; although the one expresses his ideas in words and the other in lines and colours. "We should call a man a great painter only as he excelled in precision



and force in the language of lines, and a great verifier as he excelled in precision and force in the language of words. A great poet would then be a term strictly, and in precisely the same sense, applicable to both, if warranted by the character of the images, or thoughts, which each in their respective languages conveyed." As an instance we are given Landseer's picture, *The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner*: "The exquisite execution of the glossy and crisp hair of the dog, the bright, sharp touching of the green bough beside it, the clear painting of the wood on the coffin, and the folds of the blanket, are language,—language clear and expressive in the highest degree. But the close pressure of the dog's breast against the wood, the convulsive clinging of the paws, the total powerlessness of the head, laid close and motionless upon the blanket's folds, the fixed and tearful fall of the eye in its utter hopelessness, the rigidity of repose . . . . . these are all thoughts, by which it ranks as a work of high art."

Here then we have two elements: the correct rendering of external objects, and the expression of thoughts and feelings by means of them. There is another element in all true art which is not explicitly insisted on here, and which it is extremely difficult to define; for it is possible for a work of art to give a correct representation of objects, and to express by their means thoughts and feelings, and yet to lack that beauty which alone justifies it as art. By really great pictures, or statues, or poems, we are affected in the same way as by a great building or by beautiful music, which appeal to the less clearly conscious part of man. We do not require to interpret for ourselves in words the *Sonata Apassionata* of Beethoven, nor the dramatic force of Chopin's *Mazurkas*, nor need we

struggle to describe in prose the effect which a Gothic cathedral or an Egyptian temple produces in us. So the figures of the *Nereids*, or the relief on the base of the column from Ephesus, or the *Victory* from Olympia, or the *Spring* of Botticelli, or even a portrait by Reynolds or Romney, and so again *The Sensitive Plant* or *The Blessed Damsel*, do far more than correctly render external objects and suggest thoughts and feelings for which we can find names. There is in them an element which we might call Beauty, which, especially when in harmony with the thoughts and feelings suggested by the picture or poem, works with a magic force. This force is by no means dependent on such harmony; it issues from the beauty of mere form, and is as little to be confined in the modish garments of theoretical criticism as is the hum of nature in the summer fields, or the countless silence of the stars in the blue depth of an Italian night.

Later in his book Mr. Ruskin, than whom no man of our day is more open to its influence, insists on this element of Art under the names of Typical and Vital Beauty; but I think that any such analysis of it must be as unsatisfactory as the analysis of religion. You cannot measure the heavens with a yard-stick, you cannot confine the thunder in a Leyden jar, though you may perhaps explain to the intellect some facts concerning astronomy or electricity by means of such apparatus. So by the criticism of art, or of religion, or of moral ideas, you may trace the history of their growth, or discuss their bearing on the development of the more surface faculties of man or of society, but by such means you can do little towards explaining their power, and less still to create them where they are not already present.

This mysterious element of Beauty is most obvious in works of architecture and music, because in these, since no imitation of natural objects is attempted, the human mind is content for once to admire without the vanity of verbal analysis, and perhaps the most ridiculous outcome of modern criticism is the attempt of Liszt and Berlioz to write "programme" music, in a method which has reduced itself to an absurdity in the cock-crow of St. Saën's *Danse Macabre*.

There seem to be two faults in the method whereby some modern composers seek to attain effect. The one lies in the direct imitation of natural sounds, and the other in the attempted suggestion or description of definite actions. Wagner, with his nine bulky volumes on the Musical Drama and kindred subjects, is responsible for much of this. Basing his theories on a saying of Plato that "the sound must follow the sense," he has given to these words too narrow an interpretation; the best of his own music, however, gives the lie to his theory. No doubt there must be a connection between sound and sense in music; obviously many an Italian *aria* and *fioritura* is in its jocundity ridiculous in the midst of a tragic scene, yet if we seek to pursue in detail this theory of the adaptation of sound to verbal meaning, we are landed in the absurdity of denying the value of absolute music, such as the sonatas of Beethoven and the fugues of Bach; in place of such pure music we are given the somewhat wearisome recitatives of the modern Musical Drama, and the petty adaptation of descriptive sound to definite action, as in the *Faust*, by Liszt, and the *Scènes de la vie d'un artiste*, by Berlioz. The beauty of a Scotch or a Polish song

remains clear to us even if we do not understand the words, and music which cannot rest on its own merits cannot be bolstered up and made to stand by the addition of a text closely fitted to it, nor by the accompaniment of a programme. The *Consolations* and the *Harmonies Poétiques*, by Liszt, are more musical and their effect greater by far than that of his *Poèmes Symphoniques* with their descriptive text. The former speak directly, and perhaps as strongly to some in whom they arouse emotions different from those which inspired the composer. A parallel to these two ways of music—absolute music, and music supported by a text—may be found in literature ; no poetry which is not sufficiently great to stand on its own merits of rhythm and metre and poetic diction expressing high imagination can be made to do so by the interweaving of an allegory.

The use of the *Leitmotiv* in the Musical Drama is justified by its success, but this is as far as musical suggestion can go, and resembles the hint given by the heading of a song or a sonata.

Music cannot use natural sounds, and the cases where it has been supposed to do so with success will not bear scrutiny. The music of the *Rhine Maidens*, of the *Forest*, of the *Fire*, does not imitate natural sounds heard by the composer ; Wagner, like all great musicians, calls up in us the same states of feeling which might be aroused by natural objects, but in no wise does he imitate these. The sunlight glancing through the forest glade supplies no sound to the musician, and yet he can make us feel that sunshine.

It is thus too with the other arts ; when they are really great they do much more than "render natural objects," and "suggest thoughts and feelings" which we can label and classify. Every great poem, every great picture or musical

composition, and in the same way every delightful personality, has around it an atmosphere of its own, which is like the golden haze of sunrise. This is visible only as the light is reflected from individual particles of matter, though not confined to, or definable as attached merely to those particles, but infinite in its suggestion and in its capability of expansion.

The degree to which such beauty is independent of formal thought differs in the different arts; in literature, for instance, we require a more definite expression of thought than in music, literature appealing to the intellect more than any of the other arts. In painting and still more in music and in architecture, the something "absolute," independent of mere intellectual forms and associations, is more obvious; its effect is subtle as it is strong, like the personal effect of a Mazzini, of a Napoleon, of a Rachel.

Some one will say: *You* despise analysis because *your* analysis is not sufficiently accurate and searching to explain what you are pleased to call the unconscious part of man. To this I would answer: If analysis could fathom all the depths of nature, maybe the intellect would profit, but not the whole man. Why should all things be subject to intellectual forms? the intellect is a useful faculty, but by what right is it lord of creation? Man's faculties may be compared to the rays of the sun, whose energy is shown in effects of light, of heat, of electricity, of chemical action; perhaps one of these forms of energy is not independent of all the rest, perhaps they are all different effects of the motions of particles

of which our senses are not conscious, but in any case it seems to me to be as shortsighted to subject all things to the judgment of the intellect as it would be to say that heat and chemical action only exist in order to produce light.

So far we see that, according to Mr. Ruskin, the greatness of art depends on the expression of ideas, not on the mere imitation of external nature ; though the latter is necessary as a means of embodying the former, just as, for the human mind, such ideas as chivalry and patriotism are only realizable as embodied in a Garibaldi or a Lancelot. We arrive, then, at the definition that "the art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas, and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and occupying exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received."

And now comes the first difficulty of definition, which we must pass by as Mr. Ruskin does, namely, as to the nature of an *idea*. What then are the ideas which art is capable of expressing? According to Mr. Ruskin they fall under the following heads:—

1. Ideas of *Power* ; the vision of power exciting our veneration, and stimulating a desire in us too to be actors in the drama of the world. The power, however, must be shown in the overcoming of difficulties which it avails man to overcome.

2. The Ideas of *Imitation* ; these are often contemptible, only paltry subjects being capable of being imitated to the life. "We can imitate fruit, but not a tree." "A statue does not imitate a man, it looks like marble, which it is, and like

the idea of a man, which it expresses." The chalk outline of the bough of a tree on paper is not an imitation.

3. Ideas of *Truth*; which have "reference to statements both of the qualities of material things, and of emotions, expressions, thoughts."

4. Ideas of *Relation*; which are defined as "all the ideas conveyable by art which are the subject of direct intellectual perception, and which are therefore worthy of the name of thoughts."

5. Ideas of *Beauty*; beauty being the quality in a material object which gives us pleasure in the simple contemplation of its outward qualities, without any direct and definite exertion of the intellect.

It will occur to most people that these so-called "Ideas" are not at all correlative, and cannot properly be classed together; and that the juxtaposition of Truth, Imitation, Relation, is confusing. Relation is one form of Truth, imitation in the sense used by the author is Truth too, but Truth about facts lying on the surface and unimportant; finally, Truth is perhaps not so much an Idea to be expressed, at least in this sense of the word, as a necessary condition of the value of any expression.

There remain the Ideas of Power and Beauty, and even these seem to be hardly on a par. And then what of those other Ideas which are characteristic of higher humanity,—justice, energy, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and so on? Perhaps we should do better to admit that art is capable of expressing all the Ideas which ennoble humanity, but that to be successful it must exhibit them in forms of sense which are true, that is, not contradictory to our experience of the world around us, and which are beautiful, that is, which satisfy some want of our

nature, in the definition of which we have as yet made but little progress.

By the way are scattered many suggestions which help us to a fuller conception of the functions of art, although they are not hung by the author on the pegs of a system. He tells us, for instance, that Ideas of Beauty are the subject of moral, not of intellectual, perception : "an object gratifies, fills, hallows, exalts the mind by its beauty ; if we perceive in it any distinct expression of thought, we have received from it, not an idea of beauty, but of relation." This was the rock on which we struck before ; on it Mr. Ruskin's ship has also gone aground. The analysis of the faculties of man can alone give us a basis on which to build up a solid critical theory ; but for practical purposes we are content to talk of sensation, intellect, and emotions, and it is to the latter that Beauty appeals. Yet who will deny the power of the intellect in rendering us more susceptible to Ideas of Beauty. The boat sailing before the wind on the lake of Como impresses me more with the beauty of its shape and motion because its form recalls to me the ship of Ulysses, and all that is bound up with the Wanderer's Story, and this through an intellectual association. "A livelier emerald in the green, a purer sapphire in the sea," are brighter and purer, and thus affect me more deeply by their beauty, owing to the association of their colours with a faery vision once seen and for ever present. The truth is that man cannot be divided up into so many faculties each of which works apart from all the rest. Just as knowledge is a whole, consisting of relations, so the human individual is a unity whose emotions, intellectual perceptions, and will, do not work independently of each other ; the conscious and unconscious exercise of these powers is also



intertwined. It is by consciously holding my body in certain positions while in motion that I learn to balance myself on my skates; the security thereby painfully attained I retain long after all the petty efforts of adaptation are forgotten,—the balance has become a part of my unconscious self, like the beating of my heart and the flow of my breath. So it is with Ideas of Beauty. We have, for instance, that a certain form of ornament, like the pediment of a temple, has been the Greeks to crown the pediment of a temple, and we again meet this shape in Renaissance architecture, at once pleased, without having first to receive the stamp of Beauty of a great artist, as a beautiful sapphire in a tradesman's window, gives us pleasure, although we forget at the moment the transparent blue of an Italian sky, and the paved work of a sapphire, nor of that "sapphire throne set in a crystal sea," nor recall to ourselves that blue is symbolic of truth. And may it not be that the curves and colours, which affect us most deeply by their beauty, have all been hallowed to us, or to our forerunners, by association, which the memory has forgotten, but which have become and still form a part of our inmost being, of which we know so little, but which to some of us constitutes what is most essentially ourselves, and which speaks most directly in times of strong emotion.

But, after all, for purposes of criticism, we can very well contemplate the various faculties of man apart from each other, just as we are accustomed to do with the qualities of material objects. It is useful to separate off intellect from emotions, as it is to consider separately the weight, the chemical constitution, the hardness of a lump of iron; and Mr. Ruskin may well be allowed to set up a category of

Beauty as of something in material objects "which gives us pleasure in the simple contemplation of its outward qualities without any direct exertion of the intellect."

Mr. Ruskin states, with considerable force, that "the utmost subtlety of investigation will only lead to ultimate instincts and principles of human nature, for which no further reason can be given but the simple will of the Deity that we should be created," and that "when we are healthy we derive pleasure from things which illustrate the nature of God." Now, whether we look on God as a personal being standing outside humanity, or as a tendency in humanity itself towards good, or as a living principal whose highest expression known to us is in man when he is at his best, we shall at least admit that it is only by the following and admiring that which is good and beautiful, as far as our faculties can perceive, and our will is strong to obey, that we can acquire true taste: and we must recognize that in the appreciation of Beauty there is a difference between men; that we often know others to be right, and ourselves to be wrong, in the criticism of works of art, recognizing that they are standing, as it were, on a higher level of humanity, which enables them to see more deeply into life and art, although we cannot for the time sympathize with their judgment because we are only on a lower level ourselves. "For the appreciation of art we require, not only the sharpened powers of physical perception and abstract intellect, but a perfect state of moral feeling, perceptions quickened by love, and judgment tempered by veneration!" "The simple treatment of the truths of nature must be pleasing to every order of mind, but the highest art, being based on the sensations of peculiar minds, sensations only occurring to them at particular times, and to a plurality

of mankind perhaps never, and being expressive of thoughts which could only rise out of a mass of the most extended knowledge, and of dispositions modified in a thousand ways by peculiarity of intellect, can only be met and understood by persons having some sort of sympathy with the high and solitary minds which Dante, Michel Angelo, Beethoven, do not approach, nor to better men in their vulgar hours.

Mr. Ruskin then proceeds to show how Turner did indeed render more accurately than any canvas the truth of "earth," and "water," and "light," than any painter who had gone before him, and that it was the very fulness of the truths he expressed which made his pictures appear mysterious, and to those whose eyes are dim to the deeper truths of nature, unreal. "He has never sacrificed a greater truth to a less. His present works present the sum and perfection of his accumulated knowledge, delivered with the impatience and passion of one who feels too much, and knows too much . . . to pause for expression, or ponder over his syllables. There is in them the truth, but the obscurity, of prophecy; the instinctive and burning language which would express less if it uttered more, which is indistinct only by its fulness, and dark with its abundant meaning. . . . He has dwelt and communed with nature all the days of his life; he knows her now too well, he cannot palter over the material littleness of her outward form; he must give her soul, or he has done nothing, and he cannot do this with the flax, and the earth, and the oil. . . . Thus he seems to speak to us: 'I cannot gather the sunbeams out of the east, or I would make *them* tell you what I have seen; but read this, and interpret this, and let us remember together.

I cannot gather the gloom out of the night sky, or I would make that teach you what I have seen ; but read this, and interpret this, and let us feel together ; and if you have not that within you which I can summon to my aid, if you have not the sun in your spirit, and the passion in your heart, which my words may awaken, though they be indistinct and swift, leave me ; for I will give you no patient mockery, no laborious insult of that glorious nature whose I am and whom I serve. Let other servants imitate the voice and gesture of their Maker while they forget His message. Hear that message from me ; but remember that the teaching of divine truth must still be a mystery.' " (§ vi. c. 2.)

Of the first part of Mr. Ruskin's book we may formulate the result as follows : the greatest artist is he who sees most clearly and presents to us the greatest number of the most important truths or ideas of God and Nature and Man, of that God of whose story Nature is for ever weaving a picture, and of whom the clearest and highest revelation knowable by man is man himself ; the mystery of whose being neither art nor philosophy can *fully* explain. But here we must object that it often occurs that those who have apparently no nobility of heart are still keenly appreciative of beauty in various forms, and capable of producing it by means of their Art. Man is so complex, that at times he almost seems to be made up of different individualities, and while one part of him is exhibiting the essence of meanness, another is soaring in the heaven of Art or Religion. Nor is it at all fair to stamp such characters at once as hypocrites ; each part of them may be sincere, but there is wanting an internal power to harmonize the discordant elements. So in Art ; it may happen that a man, who is at times sunk in

the swamp of drink or debauchery, may be capable on occasion of producing some things really beautiful. It is the fashion of some critics to deny the possibility of this, and to seek ever for the rift within the lute; but although they are often right, that a man's sin finds expression and impairs the exercise of his power, yet at times the good that is put out with no drooping of true endowments, as in the examples of such and *Il faut qu'une* and *A Song in the Time of the Raven* and *Annabel*

In *Part III*. Mr. Ruskin's analysis of what he calls the *theoretic faculty* and the *imaginative faculty*, which seem at bottom to be counterparts of each other; the "theoretic faculty" being "concerned with the moral perception and appreciation of ideas of beauty," and the imagination being "the faculty of regarding and combining in a certain mode the ideas which the mind has received from external nature." These Theoretic and Imaginative faculties we might call the appreciative and the creative powers in matters of Art.

The usefulness of the Imagination is denied by the vulgar, but they forget that they are subject to its power in many of their actions, in their loves and hates, in their devotion to their family or to their country. Mr. Ruskin boldly takes the highest ground, and bases his theory on the statement that man's function is "to be a witness of the glory of God, and to advance that glory by his reasonable obedience and resultant happiness." Now the function of the Imagi-

nation is the presentation, in forms of sense, of those deeper truths which do not lie on the surface of nature so as to strike the vulgar eye, but which to the keener sighted, the seers, are revealed; and Beauty is the name given to a quality which these facts have in common, and which appeals to the human emotions directly, rather than by means of the sensations or the intellect. "It is necessary to the existence of an Idea of Beauty that the sensual pleasure which may be its basis should be accompanied first with joy, then with love of the object, then with the perception of kindness in a superior Intelligence, finally, with thankfulness and veneration towards that Intelligence itself. . . . The sensation of Beauty is not sensual on the one hand, nor is it intellectual on the other, but is dependent on a pure sight and open state of the heart both for its truth and its intensity."

Mr. Ruskin then criticises several false opinions held about Beauty, such as that Beauty is Truth; that Beauty is merely the result of custom; that Beauty depends only on the association of ideas.

The first of these we have already discussed; that custom has much to do with our estimate of beauty, I am afraid we shall have to admit, although this does not in any wise alter the immutable character of true beauty, but only shows the weakness of the human faculties, and how they are modified irrationally from without. We have only to consider the passing fashions of women's dress, and to remember how we now think the shape given by the *corset* elegant, and how although thirty years ago we should have laughed at a figure not puffed out by a crinoline, we should equally laugh at a crinoline now. Nor is it merely in matters of fashionable dress that our opinions of beauty are so easily modified;

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ously powerful to move the senses of lower and the emotions of nobler natures ; and it imports to show how man's gradually developing notion of beauty corresponds to the Divine order of the universe, just as it does in the case of his ideas of truth and justice. Beauty is not abstract any more than these other ideas ; it is one of the categories under which the human mind classes its experience ; and although it corresponds to something real in nature, it cannot be separated from the objects it is perceived in. But this impossibility of its abstraction presents no more difficulties than are presented by the other ideas mentioned, nor does its gradual development differ from theirs. Surely no one will nowadays endeavour to set up an entity of Justice apart from human relations, nor will any one acquainted with the history of the human race attempt to deny that a just man now means a man with more consideration for others than the words would have implied even two thousand

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years ago. In the same way beauty is inseparable from things of beauty, and in the same way man's sense of beauty has changed and been developed as the centuries have passed over him ; and this change has accompanied, and is a reflection of the change of his whole life, for the art of any age is, like its language, a criterion of its character as a whole.

Mr. Ruskin then goes on to enumerate some of those "qualities, or types, on whose combination is dependent the power of mere material loveliness." Such are *Infinity*, *Unity*, *Repose*, *Symmetry*, *Purity*, *Moderation*. These and the like constitute what he calls *typical beauty* ; there is another beauty named *vital*, which arises from "the felicitous fulfilment of function in living things." We are here apparently in a maze, similar to the one in which the author lost himself in the enumeration of the ideas which art is capable of expressing.

But here, more than ever, one who owes him much will hesitate before he uses on his master what is, after all, merely petty verbal criticism ; for in the chapters on typical and vital beauty, and in those which immediately follow, on the different functions of the imagination, he is moving in the higher air, where the small quibbles of nineteenth-century logic are of little moment ; and it is as difficult to criticise him without impertinence as it would be to fall foul of his wonderful chapters in the *Stones of Venice* on *Torcello*, and *Murano*, and *St. Mark's*, on the *Nature of Gothic* and on *The Grotesque*, because of small inaccuracies of history or description. In this third part of *Modern Painters*, as in those chapters on Venice, his words are those of inspiration, attach to the word what sense you may.

The beauty of *Infinity* is well illustrated by the gradation of light in the evening sky of the early Tuscan painters, and by



the curves of nature. Of *Repose* in art we are given an example in the tomb of Ilaria di Careto. *Moderation* is found to be, not the restraint of external law, but the self-restraint, accompanied by pleasure, in him who is a law to himself; the unconscious felicity of ease without which no great work is possible. The obstacle, which man still looks on as hostile to his progress, is the cause of ugliness in art; the "effort of good moral action or of difficult labour; the beauty of a perfect man's moral sense is only possible when a man can allow his will to follow its own course without formal question, and yet with no fear of a weakness or sentimentality. Such a man is unconscious of his own perfection; temptation to do so-called wrong does not exist for him; he is at every moment rational, and yet his acts all issue directly from his inmost nature by instinct; only such an one is free. No man attains to this perfection throughout, but he who approaches it stands in the same relation to the pettier individual, who is for ever consciously struggling with right and wrong, as the true aristocrat does to the snob. This condition of perfection of character has its correlative in all craft, and especially in the higher arts. Giotto drew his O at last with magnificent ease and security of hand, and the grace of his great *Campanile* is likewise due to a mastery of design and draughtsmanship which could play with its materials and mould them as it willed without effort and without constraint. That unconscious moderation is the characteristic of Greek art in its great works is obvious; that it is equally characteristic of all that is great in modern art will be patent to every one on reflection; that it is

not incompatible with the strongest passion, nor nullified by the white heat of enthusiasm, is perhaps more difficult to realize. That even this is so will, I think, be clear to any one who will take the trouble to recall such examples as the *Vita Nuova* of Dante, or the *Sonnets* of Michel Angelo, or, in our own day, Tennyson's *Maud*, or *The Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Examples of passion unbalanced by the sense of moderation may be easily found in Byron or in Victor Hugo. In music we can occasionally find passion run wild even in Beethoven and in Schumann; in painting I would quote as instances of the strongest passion restrained without external law, the *Orpheus and Eurydice* and the *Endymion* of Watts. As Mr. Ruskin points out, the restraint imposed on itself by a great nature sometimes gives the public an idea of want of passion: "The high creative poet might even be thought, to a great extent, impassive (as shallow people think Dante stern), receiving indeed all feelings to the full, but having a great centre of reflection and knowledge, in which he stands serene and watches the feeling, as it were, from afar off. Dante in his most intense moods has entire command of himself, and can look round calmly at all moments for the image or the word which will best tell what he sees to the upper or lower world."

*Moderation* is the attribute of beauty which is "the girdle and safeguard of all the rest . . . that which is essential to the conduct and almost to the being of all other virtues, since neither imagination, nor invention, nor industry, nor sensibility, nor energy is of full avail without this of self-command, whereby works truly masculine and mighty are produced, and by the signs of which they are separated from that lower host of things brilliant, magnificent, and redundant, and farther yet

from that of the loose, the lawless, the exaggerated, the insolent, and the profane."

Finally, in the author's language, the attributes of *typical beauty* are attributes of God; in other words, the highest beauty is only to be found accompanied by true nobility and health; and if on the one hand it sometimes seems to receive contradiction, it will be due either to a mistaken estimate on our part, or to our not being able, owing to the complexity of his nature, to act and assume the appearance of qualities which he does not possess, or to his really possessing meaner qualities, which on different occasions get the better of him, and force themselves to expression.

Our pleasure in *vital beauty* is intimately connected with "the kindness and unselfish fulness of heart which receives the utmost amount of pleasure from the happiness of all things," and "setting the characters of typical beauty aside, the pleasure afforded by every organic form is in proportion to its appearance of healthy vital energy."

Now men unconsciously set up for themselves a generic form with which they compare individuals; this generic form they are apt to call the *ideal* of the object, since it is their idea of what the object ought to be. Referred to animals or plants, this ideal form seems to consist in "the full development of all the powers and properties of the creature as such, and is inconsistent with accidental or imperfect developments, and even with a great variation from average size, the ideal size being neither gigantic nor diminutive." "Out of a large number of primroses or violets, . . . the greater part would be very efficient primroses and violets." This *ideal* admits, however, of greater variety among the more complex forms

of nature ; for instance : "The ideal of the park oak is . . . full size, united terminal curve, equal and symmetrical range of branches on each side. The ideal of the mountain oak may be anything,—twisting, and leaning, and shattered, and rock-encumbered,—so only that amidst all its misfortunes it maintain the dignity of an oak ; and, indeed, I look upon this kind of tree as more ideal than the other, in so far as, by its efforts and struggles, more of its nature, enduring power, patience in waiting for and ingenuity in obtaining what it wants, is brought out, and so more of the essence of the oak exhibited than under more fortunate conditions." For "the repose of which we also spoke as necessary to all beauty is repose, not of inanition, nor of luxury, nor of irresolution, but of magnificent energy and being ; in action, the calmness of trust and determination ; in rest, the consciousness of duty accomplished and victory won ; and this repose, and this felicity, can take place as well in the midst of trial and tempest as beside the waters of comfort ; they persist only when the creature is unfaithful to itself, or is afflicted by circumstances unnatural and malignant to its being, and for the contending with which it was neither fitted nor ordained."

This is good sense, and is worked out farther in what the author has to say about the ideal of man in art. The Greek attained the ideal of bodily form, but his bodily ideal has been modified by the influence of the mind : "There is a certain period of soul culture when it begins to interfere with some of the characters of typical beauty belonging to the bodily frame, the stirring of the intellect wearing down the flesh, and the moral enthusiasm burning its way out to heaven through the emaciation of the earthly vessel ; and that there is in this indication of the subduing of the mortal by the

immortal part an ideal glory of perhaps a purer and higher range than that of the more perfect material form."

Who is there who cannot recall some example of human beauty which would fail to fulfil the canons of Greek sculpture, and yet where the expression of the face, and the grace of mind and movement more than counterbalance what are deficiencies of the earlier standard, the soul piercing through the "stuff" until the body is forgotten. We shall find it in Robert Brown- ing's *Old Pictures* on a later page. The complex, the human qualities demanding separate and unequal treatment from the ideal count

suffering, nor even of past and conquered sin," but only "the immediate operation and presence of the degrading power of sin." Of the sins which especially degrade the face of man, and render him unfit as a model for painting, the author enumerates pride, sensuality, ferocity, and fear; "these are the four passions whose presence in any degree on the human face is degradation." Here I must perforce abstain from quoting, and leave it to yourselves to read these pages of Mr. Ruskin's once again. For rational analysis of human character, and for fine appreciation of what is really human strength and human weakness, I can only compare them to scattered passages in the dialogues of Plato.

The author's remark is to be remembered, that no great colourist was ever basely sensual; even Titian "redeems all by his glory of hue, so that he cannot paint altogether coarsely; and with Giorgione, who had nobler and more serious intellect,

the sense of nudity is utterly lost, there is no need nor desire of concealment any more, but his naked figures move along the trees like fiery pillars, and lie on the grass like flakes of sunshine." And again, as to the nude, he acutely notices that "in climates where the body can be more openly and frequently visited by sun and weather, the nude both comes to be regarded in a way more grand and pure, as necessarily awakening no ideas of a base kind (as pre-eminently with the Greeks), and also from the exposure receives a firmness and sunny elasticity very different from the silky softness of the clothed nations of the north, where every model looks as if accidentally undressed.

As to the expression of passion generally by art, the author is of opinion that the use and value of it "is not as a subject of contemplation itself, but as it breaks up the fountains of the great deep of the human mind, or displays its mightiness and ribbed majesty, as mountains are seen in their stability best among a coil of clouds"; and subjects of "human misery, slaughter, famine, plague, peril, and crime, are better in the main avoided, as of unprofitable and hardening influence, unless so far as out of the suffering, hinted rather than expressed, we may raise into nobler relief the eternal enduring of fortitude and affection, of mercy and self-devotion." Here there are two things to be noted: first, the apparent contradiction between the expression of passion as allowed by the author under certain conditions, and that repose and moderation which are characteristic of all that is ideal; and secondly, that the facts of human misery are only admitted by him as subjects of art when modified by the light of a faith which believes that there is still behind them the merciful hand of God.

The first of these, as it was showed<sup>u</sup> under the head of moderation, implies no real contradiction, for as has been said with

truth, "no love is pure which is not passionate, no virtue is safe which is not enthusiastic"; passion implies the absorption of the individual in some object outside himself, which makes him forget all else, it is true; but then all that is greatest in the world is the result of such devotion, and there is a sense in which "virtue" is depending to the formula of Aristotle, but in which depends on his power of sinking himself, attainment of some one thing:—

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The author then proceeds to analyze the imaginative faculty, which he has shown to be necessary to the production of great art. The imaginative faculty, which is the creator of works of art, "is utterly mysterious and inexplicable, and to be recognized in its results only, or in the negative results of its absence"; it combines, and by combination creates new forms; but the secret principal of this combination has not been shown by the analyst. Again, it treats or regards both the simple images and its own combinations in peculiar ways; and, thirdly, "it penetrates, analyzes, and reaches truths by no other faculty discoverable."

In the first of these its functions, the imagination presupposes accurate observation and a good memory; in order to be able to *compose*, to combine natural objects in a way suitable to express his ideas, the artist must know nature, he

can then in a sense recreate her parts in his own harmony. "Let us suppose that the artist has perfect knowledge of the forms of the *Aiguilles Vertes* and the *Argentière*, and of the great glacier between them, at the upper extremity of the valley of Chamounix. The forms of the mountains please him, but the presence of the glacier suits not his purpose. He removes the glacier, sets the mountains farther apart, and introduces between them part of the valley of the Rhone." It is "the conception of this unity," which joins into a perfect whole two or more details themselves less perfect than many others, which is the test of creative faculty in art. A powerfully imaginative mind seizes and combines at the same instant, not only two, but all the important ideas of its poem or picture; and while it works with any one of them, it is at the same time working with and modifying all in their relations to it. In this connection the author makes an acute remark: "All the parts of a noble work must be," in a certain sense, "imperfect. Each must imply and ask for all the rest, and the glory of every one of them must consist in its relation to the rest, neither while so much as one is wanting can any be right."

To the imaginative faculty, then, it is open to use all things, "for out of imperfect elements it alone can make a perfect whole; it is not therefore bound down to conventional elements of beauty, but the whole world is open to its action, as to the charity of God himself."

In this power of associative imagination Mr. Ruskin places Tintoret far at the head of all painters, and in landscape, Turner; citing the *Cephalus and Procris* of *Liber Studiorum* as an example of that unity, which is work of this faculty.

"The final tests of the work of associative imagination are its intense simplicity, its perfect harmony, its absolute truth."



In reference to the latter, the greatest idealists have been the most accurate observers, and it is study of detail which enables the painter to choose what to represent and what to omit.

But the mode in which high imagination seizes on and deals with its materials is equally characteristic. This the author calls its *penetrative* conception of poet or painter is held and culty. Every character that is so much a like Æschylus, Homer, Dante, or Shakespeld by the heart; and every circumstance air being, speaking, or seeming, is seized ithin, and is referred to that inner secret s old is never lost for an instant, so that ev been thought out from the heart opens fo the heart, leads us to the centre, and the r what more we may."

The author contrasts Milton and Dante in this penetrative faculty of the imagination; Milton's images being often full of mere material details, whereas the imagination of Dante never stops at the outside of things, "it ploughs them all aside and plunges at once into the very central fiery heart." As instance of this power to express the heart of the matter he quotes from Dante, "Quel giorno più noi non legemmo avanti," and from Shakespeare, Macduff's words, "He has no children." Dante and Shakespeare are full of such examples. In the literature of our own day the same characteristic is to be found in those whom we are accustomed to look on as the greatest poets of our country. In Browning's *Blot on the Scutcheon*, "I was so young, I had no mother, and I loved him so," and again, "Thorold, how very wretched you must be"; in Rossetti, such expressions as "Words whose silence wastes and kills," "The wonder was not yet quite gone from that still

look of hers," "All that is when he comes," are examples of the same power.

On the subject of originality the author gives us another word of refreshing good sense: "That virtue of originality that men so often strive after is not newness, as they vainly think, it is only genuineness; it all depends on this single glorious faculty of getting to the spring of things and working out from that; it is the coolness and clearness and deliciousness of the water fresh from the mountain head."

The higher the imagination, the simpler its expression; fancy indeed loves to fly from detail to detail, but imagination "gets hold of a moment or link in the middle that implies all the rest and fastens there"; with one scene it tells the whole story; it not only leaves much work for the spectator to do for himself, a "few scratches on a wall will do that," but it suggests what it leaves untold: "The vacancy of a truly imaginative work results not from absence of ideas, or incapability of grasping or detailing them, but from the painter having told the whole pith and power of his subject, and disdain to tell more, and the sign of this being the case is that the imagination of the beholder is forced to act in a certain mode, and feels itself overpowered and borne away by that of the painter, and not able to defend itself, nor go which way it will; and the value of the work depends on the truth, authority, and inevitability of this suggestiveness, and on the absolute right choice of the critical moment."

In Italian art Tintoret and Michel Angelo are the great masters by this penetrative power of their imagination, "whose virtue is its reaching by intuition, and intensity of gaze, a more essential truth than is seen on the surface of things, . . . the base of whose authority and being is its

perpetual thirst for truth, and purpose to be true ; . . . it is for ever looking under masks and burning up mists ; no fairness of form, no majesty of seeming, will satisfy it." And for the apprehension of these deep truths the heart is necessary : "We have seen that the imagination is in no small degree dependent on acuteness of vision ; in fact, all moral truth can only be seen, and it is observable, generally, that all truth is imaginative both in conception and in action . . . and, therefore, all egotism and selfishness are in proportion to their constancy, destructiveness ; whose play and power depend altogether on the power to forget ourselves and enter, like possessing bodies of things about us."

As illustrative of the temper of those who have possessed this faculty,—Dante, Michel Angelo, Tintoret,—let me quote once more : "As the life of the imagination is in the discovering of truth, it is clear that it can have no respect for sayings or opinions ; knowing in itself when it has invented truly,—restless and tormented except when it has this knowledge, its sense of success or failure is too acute to be affected by praise or blame. Sympathy it desires—but can do without ; of opinions it is regardless, not in pride, but because it has no vanity, and is conscious of a rule of action, and object of aim, in which it cannot be mistaken ; partly also in pure energy of desire, and longing to do and to invent more and more, which suffer it not to suck the sweetness of praise, unless a little, with the end of the rod in its hand, and without pausing in its march. It goes straightforward up the hill ; no voices nor mutterings can turn it back, nor petrify it from its purpose."

Such imagination may be accompanied by *fancy*, but is a far nobler power. Fancy is cold and of the intellect, imagination of the heart; fancy may call up countless beautiful details, but unless a man have imagination to combine those that suit each other in unity he will produce no great work of art.

Mr. Ruskin talks of another faculty of the imagination, which he calls *contemplative*; this seems to be a sort of imaginative memory, not adding charms to the objects it recalls, but softening and mellowing them by the omission of harsh or incongruous details.

Finally, the author once more points out that the imagination is based upon and appeals to a deep heart feeling, insisting again on the unity of man and the connection between art and all his noblest faculties; the same connection is rendered conspicuous in his remarks about *style*. In these Mr. Ruskin starts once more from his axiom that that art is greatest which expresses the greatest ideas, which tells us of the nobility of man, which is inspired by a pure and enthusiastic heart; which suggests by the imagination noble grounds for noble emotions. "I mean by noble emotions, those four principal sacred passions—Love, Veneration, Admiration, and Joy (this latter especially, if unselfish); and their opposites—Hatred, Indignation (or Scorn), Horror, and Grief,—this last, when unselfish, becoming Compassion." And so style is seen not to be something external which can be taught to a class, but the consequence of nobility of intention in the artist; the main difference between great and mean art "lies not in definable methods of handling . . . or choice of subjects, but wholly in the nobleness of the end to which the effort of the painter is addressed; . . . it does not matter whether he paint the petals of a rose or the chasms of a precipice, so that

Love and Admiration attend him as he labours; . . . it does not matter whether he seek for his subjects among peasants or nobles, among the heroic or the simple, in courts or in fields, so only that he behold all things with a thirst for beauty and a hatred of meanness and vice." And yet, since there are "certain . . . . . ation which are usually adopted by the m . . . . . d certain characters of subject usually del . . . . . blest hearts," we can in a right sense talk . . . . . t style.

There are deg . . . . . beautiful, and "some ground for separa . . . . . unequal ranks painters who have, neverth . . . . . everal way represented something that v . . . . . od," and so we may separate off some . . . . . of the *great style* manifested in their wo . . . . . greatness of style con-

sists: *first*, in the habitual choice of subjects of thought which involve wide interests and profound passions, . . . . if the choice be sincere." The choice must also be wise, that is, according to the intellectual and imaginative capacity of the artist. It is useless, for instance, for a man of Overbeck's calibre to paint us religious and historical scenes which he cannot grasp, even if he fulfil the first two conditions of having some sincerity of heart, and choosing important subjects. "The *second* characteristic" of great style is "that it introduces in the conception of its subject as much Beauty as is possible consistently with truth," and the *third* characteristic is that "it includes the largest possible quantity of Truth in the most perfect possible harmony. If it were possible for art to give all the truths of nature it ought to do so. But this is not possible. Choice must always be made of some facts which can be represented from among others which must be

passed by in silence, or even in some respects misrepresented. The inferior artist chooses unimportant and scattered truths; the great artist chooses the most necessary first, and afterwards the most consistent with these, so as to obtain the greatest possible and most harmonious *sum*." The author points out how Rembrandt sacrificed "the expression of every character of objects which depends on tenderness of shape or tint, . . . the light and colour of five-sixths of his picture," in order to obtain "the exact force with which the light on the most illumined part of an object is opposed to its obscurer portions."

As a consequence of these conditions of great style it follows that "in general, all great drawing will be distinct drawing," allowing for the elements of "mystery, which must have their proper place in the general harmony"; and secondly, that since "greatness depends on the sum of truth, and this sum of truth can always be increased by delicacy of handling, . . . great art is always delicate."

The fourth characteristic of great art is Invention. "Historical or simply narrative art is very precious in its proper place and way," but is never great art until the poetical or imaginative power touches it.

And so we see that the sum of these characteristics of great art is simply the sum of all the higher powers of man. "For as the choice of the high subject involves all conditions of right moral choice, and as the love of beauty involves all conditions of right imagination, and as the grasp of truth involves all strength of sense, evenness of judgment, and honesty of purpose, and as poetical power involves all swiftness of invention and accuracy of historical memory, the sum of all these powers is the sum of the human soul." Hence the folly of trying to

teach "great art" to students. "Great art is precisely that which never was, nor will be taught; it is pre-eminently, and finally, the expression of the spirits of great men."

The character of *finish* given by an artist is characteristic of the greatness or pettiness of his art. For there is in painting, as in the manufacture of articles, a finish which is a waste of labour. Unnecessary finish is in the works of Carlo Dolce and many Dutch painters. An elaborate finish adds nothing to the complete expression of ideas, but merely shows their poverty. The finish of a great artist, on the other hand, is the outcome of the delicacy of his painting, it being thus a sign that he is enabled to represent more truthfully. This is well illustrated by plates contrasting the finish of the drawing of the trunks and branches of trees.

The conclusion, then, is this, that great art is only possible as the expression of noble humanity; that a great artist is a great teacher, seeing, and making us see, new realms of the unseen; that the highest art is attainable only when there occurs combined in the individual an enthusiastic love of what is good, a wide grasp of the facts of nature, and a power of sifting and ordering these into a harmonious whole; while in humbler spheres the perception of the true beauty even of a flower depends on some share in this same faculty of the imagination, which is impossible except to those whose hearts are not yet chilled by custom or by sin.

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In illustration of the statements made above of the inseparability of Beauty from goodness, and of man's gradually developing sense of Beauty corresponding to something in the

Divine order of the universe, I will now quote some words of Plato which I shall not have another opportunity of presenting to you. If the language remains vague and mystical to you, I would remind you once more that it is not on that account irrational. The greatest of modern philosophers having arrived, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, at the conclusion that man by his intellect cannot attain to a knowledge of the realities which underlie objects of "sense," made a new beginning, and admitted that, by means of "practical reason," he could still grasp moral and æsthetic truth. So Plato in the *Phædrus*, in the *Gorgias*, and in the *Republic*, having given us all the truth that his penetrative analysis of human experience could afford, willingly sought the aid of poetic myths to supply a means of presenting truths beyond the reach of human logic.

In the passages quoted you will find frequent repetition of the word *love*, and of images derived from the passion of the individual. The explanation of this is to be found in the word Philosophy,—the love of wisdom,—which Plato interprets to mean an enthusiastic desire for true knowledge, parallel in its passionate devotion to that personal love which is one manifestation of it; the pursuit of Goodness, the search for Truth, the desire of Beauty, are to him all forms of the worship of God. "The unity of truth, the consistency of the warring elements of the world, the enthusiasm of knowledge when first beaming upon mankind, the relativity of ideas to the human mind, and of the human mind to ideas, the faith in the invisible, the adoration of eternal nature, are all included, consciously or unconsciously, in Plato's doctrine of love." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor Jowett, in his *Introduction* to the *Symposium*; it is from his translation that the following passages are quoted.



In Plato's treatment of this subject we are inevitably reminded of the thread running through the works of Dante, beginning with his passion for Beatrice Portinari, and ending in the vision of the Paradiso; to him, too, there is an audible harmony between the Desire of Beauty and the pursuit of Good, the *summum bonum*, which is attainable only by him who has seen the unity of Beatrice, the unity of God, in a way which recalls many a passage of Plato.

In the *Phædrus* Plato discusses the nature of a true and false speech, and how words bear a meaning which is applicable to things, and how it is the business of the rhetorician to practise the art of rhetoric, in which words we are to be used by statesmen and politicians of his day as a means to persuade men, regardless of truth, with that higher art of speech which makes words the vehicles by which to impart true knowledge; an art to be practised only by those who are "lovers of wisdom," and who have had a sight of the eternal Ideas. Such use "the words of knowledge which have a living Soul, of which the written word is no more than an image. . . . I am speaking of an intelligent writing which is graven in the soul of him who has learned." Such rhetoric deals with realities, with the Ideals of "divine philosophy" which it imparts to men.

The scene of the *Phædrus* is laid under a plane tree, on the banks of the Ilissus, near the place "where Boreas is said to have carried off Orithyia"; the little stream is delightfully clear and bright, and the grasshoppers, those servants of the Muses, chirrup in the greenery all around, "truly a fair and shady resting place, full of summer sounds and scents."—The Greeks, forsooth, had no eyes for Nature!

Phædrus, whose "love of discourse is truly superhuman," describes the disadvantages of love in a rhetorical speech full of persuasion, much in the same style used in *gli Asolani* by that polished trifier Bembo, and Socrates caps it by another in similar style. He then gets up to go, but as he is about to cross the brook, the voice of the *dæmon* bids him stay. "The usual sign was given to me; that is, the sign which never bids, but always forbids me to do what I am going to do. And I thought I heard a voice saying in my ear that I had been guilty of impiety, and that I must not go away till I had made atonement." And so he stays, and inspired by "the Muses, who are chiefly concerned with heaven and thought, divine as well as human," he tells of Love as of a "divine madness."

In Greek the words for madness and for the prophetic gift of Apollo are nearly alike; in Greek, too, *enthusiasm* in the strict sense meant being "possessed" by the God. Hence the description of the desire of Beauty as "divine madness." This, says Plato, is subdivided into "four kinds—prophetic, initiatory, poetic, erotic, having four gods presiding over them; the first was the inspiration of Apollo, the second that of Dionysus, the third that of the Muses, the fourth that of Aphrodite and Eros. . . . He who has no touch of the Muses' madness in his soul comes to the door and thinks that he will get into the temple by the help of art,—he, I say, and his poetry are not admitted. . . . The soul is immortal, for that is immortal which is ever in motion; but that which moves another and is moved by another, in ceasing to move ceases also to live. Therefore, only that which is self-moving, never leaving self, never ceases to move, and is the fountain and beginning of motion to all that moves besides. Now, the beginning is unbegotten, for that

which is begotten has a beginning; but the beginning itself has no beginning, for if a beginning were begotten of something, that something would not be a beginning. But that which is unbegotten must also be indestructible; for if beginning were destroyed, there could be no beginning out of anything, nor anything out of a beginning; and all things must have a beginning. And therefore the self-moving is the beginning of motion; and this can neither be destroyed nor begotten, else the whole heavens and all creation would collapse and stand still, and never again have motion or birth. But if the self-moving is immortal, he who affirms that self-motion is the very idea and essence of the soul will not be put to confusion. For the body which is moved from without is soulless; but that which is moved from within has a soul, for such is the nature of the soul. But if the soul be truly affirmed to be self-moving, then must she also be without beginning, and immortal. Enough of the soul's immortality.

"Her form is a theme of divine and large discourse; the tongue of man may, however, speak of this briefly, and in a figure. Let our figure be a composite nature—a pair of winged horses and a charioteer. Now the winged horses and the charioteer of the gods are all of them noble, and of noble breed, but our horses are mixed; moreover, our charioteer drives them in a pair; and one of them is noble and of noble origin, and the other is ignoble and of ignoble origin; and the driving, as might be expected, is no easy matter with us. I will endeavour to explain to you in what way the mortal differs from the immortal creature. The soul has the care of inanimate being everywhere, and traverses the whole heaven, in divers forms appearing;—when perfect and fully winged she soars upward, and is the ruler of the universe;

while the imperfect soul loses her feathers, and drooping in her flight at last settles on the solid ground—there, finding a home, she receives an earthly frame which appears to be self-moved, but is really moved by her power; and this composition of soul and body is called a living and mortal creature. For immortal no such union can be reasonably believed to be; although fancy, not having seen nor surely known the nature of God, may imagine an immortal creature having a body, and having also a soul, which are united throughout all time. Let that, however, be as God wills, and be spoken of acceptably to him. And now let us ask the reason why the soul loses her feathers.

"The wing is that corporeal element which is most akin to the divine, and is intended to soar aloft and carry that which gravitates downward into the upper region, where dwell the gods. Now the divine is beauty, wisdom, goodness, and the like; and by these the wing of the soul is nourished, and grows apace; but when fed upon evil and foulness, and the like, wastes and falls away. Zeus, the mighty lord holding the reins of a winged chariot, leads the way in heaven, ordering all and caring for all; and there follows him the array of gods and demi-gods, marshalled in eleven bands; for Hestia only abides at home in the house of heaven; of the rest, they who are reckoned among the princely twelve march in their order. They see many blessed sights in the inner heaven, and there are many ways to and fro, along which the happy gods are passing, each one fulfilling his own work; and he who will and can may follow, for jealousy has no place in the celestial choir. But when they go to feast and festival, then they mount to the top of the dome of heaven up the steep. Now the chariots of the gods in

even poise, obeying the rein, glide rapidly ; but the others labour, for the steed who has evil in him, sinking heavily to the earth, keeps them down, when he has not been rightly trained by the charioteer :—and this is the hour of agony and extremest conflict for the soul. For the immortals, when they are at the centre, go out and stand upon the back of heaven, and of the spheres carries them round, and beyond. Now of the heaven which is, no earthly poet has ever sung or will sing. I must tell, for I am bound to speak of the truth. The colourless and formless essence and only reality dwells eternally in knowledge in this home, visible to the mind, the lord of the soul. And the divine intelligence, feeding upon mind and pure knowledge, the proper food of every soul, rejoices at beholding reality, and once more gazing upon truth, is replenished and made glad, until the revolution of the worlds bring her round to the same place. In the revolution she beholds justice, and temperance, and knowledge absolute, not in the form of created things, or of things relative, which men call existence, but knowledge absolute, in existence absolute ; and beholding the other true existences in like manner, and feasting upon them, she passes down into the interior of the heavens and returns home, and there the charioteer, putting up his horse at the stall, gives them ambrosia to eat and nectar to drink.

“ This is the life of the gods ; but of other souls, that which follows God best and is likeliest to him lifts the head of the charioteer into the outer world, and is carried round in the revolution, troubled indeed by the steeds, and with difficulty

beholding true being ; while another rises and falls, and sees, and again fails to see by reason of the unruliness of the steeds. The rest of the souls are also longing after the upper world, and they all follow, but, not being strong enough, they are carried down in the deep below, plunging, treading on one another, striving to be first ; and there is confusion and the extremity of effort, and many of them are lamed or have their wings broken through the ill-driving of the charioteers ; and all of them, after a fruitless toil, depart, without being initiated into the mysteries of true being, and, departing, feed upon opinion. The reason of their great desire to behold the plain of truth is that the food which is suited to the highest part of the soul comes out of that meadow ; and the wing on which the soul soars is nourished with this. And there is a law of Destiny, that the soul which attains any vision of truth in company with the god is preserved from harm until the next period, and if attaining always is always unharmed. But when she is unable to follow, and fails to behold the vision of truth, and through some ill-hap sinks beneath the double load of forgetfulness and vice, and her feathers fall from her and she drops to earth, then the law ordains that this soul shall at her first birth pass, not into any other animal, but only into man ; and the soul which has seen most of truth shall come to the birth as a philosopher, or artist, or some musical and loving nature ; that which has seen truth in the second degree shall be a righteous king or lordly warrior ; the soul which is of the third class shall be a politician, or economist, or trader ; the fourth shall be a lover of gymnastic toils, or a physician ; the fifth a prophet, or hierophant ; to the sixth a poet, or some other imitative artist, will be appropriate ; to the seventh

the life of an artisan or husbandman; to the eighth that of a sophist or demagogue; to the ninth that of a tyrant;—all these are states of probation, in which he who lives righteously improves, and he who lives unrighteously deteriorates his lot.

“Ten thousand years before the soul can return to the place from which she came, for she cannot grow her wings in less than ten thousand years. The philosopher, guileless and true, or the saint, who is not without philosophy, may acquire wings in ten thousand years; but the others, during a period of a thousand years, are sent three times in succession, to the place of judgment, and go away at the end of three thousand years, when they receive judgment when they first die. For them, after their first life, and after the judgment they give, they are sent to the houses of correction which are under the earth, and are punished; others are sent to some place in heaven, whither they are lightly borne by justice, and there they live in a manner worthy of the life which they led here when in the form of men. And at the end of the first thousand years the good souls, and also the evil souls, both come to draw lots, and choose their second life, and they may take any which they like. The soul of a man may pass into the life of a beast, or from the beast return again into the man. But the soul of him who has never seen the truth will not pass into the human form, for man ought to have general notions, proceeding from many particulars of sense to one conception of reason; and this is the recollection of those things which our soul once saw while following God—when, regardless of that which we now call being, she raised her head up towards the true being. And therefore the mind of the philosopher alone has wings;

and this is just, for he is always, according to the measure of his abilities, clinging in recollection to those things in which God abides, and in beholding which He is what He is. And he who employs aright these memories is ever being initiated into perfect mysteries, and alone becomes truly perfect. But, as he forgets earthly interests and is rapt in the divine, the vulgar deem him mad, and rebuke him ; they do not see that he is inspired.

"Thus far I have been speaking of the fourth and last kind of madness, which is imputed to him who, when he sees the beauty of earth, is transported with the recollection of the true beauty ; he would like to fly away, but he cannot ; he is like a bird fluttering and looking upward, and careless of the world below ; and he is therefore esteemed mad. And I have shown this, of all inspirations, to be the noblest and highest, and offspring of the highest, and that he who loves the beautiful is called a lover because he partakes of it. For, as has been already said, every soul of man has, in the way of nature, beheld true being ; this was the condition of her passing into the form of man. But all souls do not easily recall the things of the other world ; they may have seen them for a short time only, or they may have been unfortunate in their earthly lot, and may have lost the memory of the holy things which they saw there through some evil and corrupting association. Few only retain an adequate remembrance of them ; and they, when they behold any image of that other world, are rapt in amazement ; but they are ignorant of what this rapture means, because they do not clearly perceive. For there is no light in the earthly copies of justice or temperance, or any of the higher qualities which are precious to souls ; they are seen through a glass dimly ;



and there are few who, going to the images, behold in them the realities, and they only with difficulty. They might have seen beauty shining in brightness when, with the happy band following in the train of Zeus, as we philosophers, or of other gods as others did, they saw a vision and were initiated into my blessed, and which having no experience of sight of apparition shining in pure light that living tomb was prisoned in the body thus long over the

be truly called most our state of innocence ; come ; admitted to the e and calm and happy, d not yet enshrined in , now that we are im- is shell. Let me linger ich have passed away."

In the *Symposium* Agathon, and the guests among whom are Socrates, Phædrus, and Aristophanes, propose that conversation shall take the place of drink : "Let us each of us in turn make a speech in honour of Love." When the turn comes to Socrates, after some preliminary questions, without which he would not be Socrates, he arrives at the conclusion that "the good is also the beautiful."

"Then in wanting the beautiful, love wants also the good?"

"I cannot refute you, Socrates," said Agathon ; "and let us suppose that what you say is true."

"Say rather, dear Agathon, that you cannot refute the truth, for Socrates is easily refuted. And now I will take my leave of you, and rehearse the tale of love which I heard from Diotima of Mantinea, a woman wise in this and many other kinds of knowledge, who in the days of old, when the Athenians offered sacrifice before the coming of the plague, delayed the disease ten years. . . .

"'What then is love?' I asked; 'is he mortal?' 'No.' 'What then?' 'As in the former instance, he is neither mortal nor immortal, but in a mean between the two.' 'What is he then, Diotima?' 'He is a great spirit, and, like all spirits, he is intermediate between the divine and the mortal.' 'And what,' I said, 'is his power?' 'He interprets,' she replied, 'between gods and men, conveying to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and replies of the gods; he is the mediator who spans the chasm which divides them, and in him all is bound together, and through him the arts of the prophet and the priest, their sacrifices and mysteries and charms, and all prophecy and incantation, find their way. For God mingles not with man; but through Love all the intercourse and speech of God with man, whether awake or asleep, is carried on. The wisdom which understands this is spiritual; all other wisdom, such as that of arts and handicrafts, is mean and vulgar. Now these spirits or intermediate powers are many and diverse, and one of them is Love.'

"I said: 'O thou stranger woman, thou sayest well; and now, assuming love to be such as you say, what is the use of him to us men?' 'That, Socrates,' she replied, 'I will proceed to unfold: of his nature and birth I have already spoken; and you acknowledge that love is of the beautiful. But someone will say: Of the beautiful in what, Socrates and Diotima?—or rather let me put the question more clearly, and ask: When a man loves the beautiful, what does he desire?' I answered her, 'That the beautiful may be his.' 'Still,' she said, 'the answer suggests a further question: What is given by the possession of beauty?' 'To what you have asked,' I replied, 'I have no answer ready.' 'Then,' she

said, 'let me put the word "good" in the place of the beautiful, and repeat the question once more: He who loves the good loves; what does he love?' 'The possession of the good,' I said. 'And what does he gain who possesses the good?' 'Happiness,' I replied; 'there is no difficulty in answering that.' 'Yes,' she replied, 'we are made happy by the acquisition of good, but there is no need to ask why a man desires it, for the answer is already final.' 'You are right,' I said, 'this wish and this desire are common to all; all men always desire their own good, or only something better than they have.' 'All men,' I replied; 'the desire for good is common to all.' 'Why then,' she rejoined, 'are not all men always loving the same thing?' 'I wonder,' I said, 'why that is.' 'There is nothing to wonder at,' she replied; 'the reason is, that one part of love is separated off and receives the name of the whole, but the other parts have other names.' 'Give an illustration,' I said. She answered me as follows: 'There is poetry, which, as you know, is complex and manifold. All creation or passage of non-being into being is poetry or making, and the processes of all art are creative; and the masters of arts are all poets or makers.' 'Very true.' 'Still,' she said, 'you know that they are not called poets, but have other names; the specific term poetry is confined to that portion of the art which is separated off from the rest of poetry, and is concerned with music and metre; and this is what is called poetry, and they who possess this kind of poetry are called poets.' 'Very true,' I said. 'And the same holds of love. For you may say generally that all desire of good and happiness is only the great and subtle power

of love ; but those who turn towards him by any other path, whether the path of money-making, or gymnastics, or philosophy, are not called lovers—the name of the genus is reserved for those whose affection takes one form only—they alone are said to love, or to be lovers.' 'I dare say,' I replied, 'that you are right.' 'Yes,' she added ; 'and you hear people say that lovers are seeking for their other half ; but I say that they are seeking neither for the half of themselves, nor for the whole, unless the half or the whole be also a good. And they will cut off their own hands and feet and cast them away, if they are evil ; for they love not what is their own, but what is another's, unless indeed by the words "good" and "their own" and "bad" and "another's" they mean the same thing. For there is nothing which men love but the good. Do you think that there is?' 'Certainly, I should say, that there is nothing.' 'Then,' she said, 'the conclusion of the whole matter is, that men love the good.' 'Yes,' I said. 'To which may be added that they love the possession of the good?' 'Yes, that may be added.' 'And not only the possession, but the everlasting possession of the good?' 'That may be added too.' 'Then love,' she said, 'may be described generally as the love of the everlasting possession of the good?' 'That is most true. . . .'

"Creative souls—for there certainly are men who are more creative in their souls than in their bodies—conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive or retain. And what are these conceptions?—wisdom and virtue in general. And such creators are poets, and all artists who are deserving of the name inventor. But the greatest and fairest sort of wisdom by far is that which is concerned with the ordering of states and families, and which is called temperance and

justice. And he who in youth has the seed of these implanted in him, and is himself inspired, when he comes to maturity desires to beget and generate. He wanders about seeking beauty that he may beget offspring,—for in deformity he will beget nothing,—and naturally embraces the beautiful rather than the ugly. Above all, when he finds a fair and noble soul he embraces the one he is full of speech about virtue and the fruits of a good man; and he tries to educate the touch of the beautiful, which is ever present, even when absent, he brings forth the same which he has received long before, and in company with which he brings forth; and they are married and have a closer friendship than mortal children, for the children who are their common offspring are fairer and more immortal. Who, when he thinks of Homer and Hesiod and other great poets, would not rather have their children than ordinary human ones? Who would not emulate them in the creation of children such as theirs, which have preserved their memory and given them everlasting glory? Or would not have such children as Lycurgus left behind him to be the saviours, not only of Lacedæmon, but of Hellas, as one may say? There is Solon, too, who is the revered father of Athenian laws; and many others there are in many other places, both among Hellenes and barbarians. All of them have given to the world many noble works, and have been the parents of virtue of every kind, and many temples have been raised in their honour for the sake of their children, which were never raised in honour of any one for the sake of his mortal children.'

"These are the lesser mysteries of love, into which even you, Socrates, may enter; to the greater and more hidden ones which are the crown of these, and to which, if you pursue them in a right spirit, they will lead, I know not whether you will be able to attain. But I will do my utmost to inform you, and do you follow if you can. For he who would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright, to love one such form only—out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another; and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognize that the beauty in every form is one and the same! And when he perceives this, he will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms. In the next stage he will consider that the beauty of the mind is more honourable than the beauty of the outward form; so that if a virtuous soul have but a little comeliness, he will be content to love and tend him, and will search out and bring to the birth thoughts which may improve the young, until he is compelled to contemplate and see the beauty of institutions and laws, and to understand that the beauty of them all is of one family, and that personal beauty is a trifle. And after laws and institutions he will go on to the sciences, that he may see their beauty, being not, like a servant, in love with the beauty of one youth or man or institution, himself a slave, mean and narrow-minded, but drawing towards and contemplating the vast sea of beauty, he will create many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom; until

on that shore he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere. To this I will proceed ; please to give me your very best attention.

“ He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has seen the beautiful in due order and succession, and has perceived a nature which is the final cause of all things (and this, Socrates, is the first place, the nature which, in growing and decaying, or waxing and waning, is at place, not fair in one point of view at one time or in one relation or at another time or in another relation or at another place, but fair to some and foul to others, or in the case of a face or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, or existing in any other being ; as, for example, in an animal, or in heaven, or in earth, or in any other place, but beauty only, absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things ! He who under the influence of true love rising upward from these begins to see that beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going or being led by another to the things of love, is to use the beauties of earth as steps along which he mounts upwards for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. This, my dear Socrates,

said the stranger of Mantinea, 'is that life above all others which man should live—in the contemplation of beauty absolute ; a beauty which, if you once beheld, you would see not to be after the measure of gold, and garments, and fair boys and youths, whose presence now entrances you ; and you, and many a one, would be content to live seeing only and conversing with them, without meat or drink, if that were possible,—you only want to be with them and to look at them. But what if man had eyes to see the true beauty—the divine beauty, I mean, pure and clear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality and all the colours and vanities of human life—thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty, divine and simple? Do you not see that in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold, not of an image, but of a reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue, to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may? Would that be an ignoble life?'

"Such, Phædrus,—and I speak not only to you, but to all of you,—were the words of Diotima ; and I am persuaded of their truth. And being persuaded of them, I try to persuade others, that in the attainment of this end human nature will not easily find a better helper than Love. And therefore also I say that every man ought to honour him as I myself honour him, and walk in his ways, and exhort others to do the same, and praise the power and spirit of Love according to the measure of my ability now and ever."







VI.  
ART AND LIFE.

*αιώνος εικων κινητή ὁ χρόνος.*





## ART AND LIFE.

*Christmas 1891.*



THOSE among us whose education by means of books was still going on while the influence of John Stuart Mill was powerful in England, cannot fail to remember a passage in his autobiography where he acknowledges the influence of poetry.

We had sat at his feet and drank in the Positivist doctrines of Comte, and had accustomed ourselves to put on one side all that was not explicable in logical language, and now we were puzzled at our master's inconsistency. The influence of Clothilde de Vaux on the founder's life we had perhaps attributed to human weakness, but here was our logician acknowledging that, although all poetry was fictitious, he yet got pleasure and satisfaction from a perusal of Wordsworth.

We began once more to question his first principles, and to ask whether, after all, the imagination dealt merely with unrealities; whether the poet's kingdom was only in the clouds; whether Homer, and Sappho, and Sophocles, and Shakespeare provided only a more refined sort of Punch and Judy show for grown-up children: as the leaven worked in us, and as with advancing years we gained more experience of life, we were provoked at first, but later perhaps not sorry, to find that the

cut-and-dried system of existence in which intellect was to be our only guide filled but a meagre portion of human life after all, and we were gradually led to reconsider whether the famous words of Kant had not truth in them, and whether the infinity of starry heavens above and of the generous impulses of the better man within the bounds which the Positive philosophy after many wanderings we came to the conclusion the world limited merely to senses, it were but a foolish perhaps be justly desirable, as the great and endeavoured to show it to be.

We found language is metaphor" and derived from the fact that it in the hands of a master it seemed to express something more than is contained in sensible objects, and that, when it was worthy of the name of literature, it dealt with feelings which were aroused in us by painting and music, and which were much akin to the facts of religion; that the existence of this very "sensible" world presupposed ideas which exceeded its limits, that without these ideas it was indeed confusion and chaos; and finally that we had in us something which refused to be content with such irrationality as the merely external world presented to our saddened gaze: the fact that we could not grasp such ideas in their entirety, that to argue about them led us to contradictions, did not perhaps so much derogate from their value as show that we, as men, were limited in our appreciation of them. And so, by degrees, we returned to the teaching of our childhood, though modified both in content and expression, and we recognized, if dimly yet with certainty, that without something corresponding to heaven and hell we had no firm ground to stand

upon here ; and so not being able to return to a bald and somewhat childish form of anthropomorphic religion, which seemed to satisfy many of our friends, we were yet glad to derive what strength and hope we could from those works of the imagination which seemed to give us a clue to the realities, which we felt exceeded the limits of space and time.

When we turned again to art and literature,—let us do away with this verbal distinction, and use the word Art to include imaginative writing,—we found that there were poems and pictures which bore on them the stamp of recognized greatness, and which were apt to be called *Classical*, and that these were the very works which contained in the highest degree the expression of what we considered to be true imagination, that is, which expressed the fullest and deepest realities of Nature and of human life. We were puzzled, it is true, to find grouped with them as *Classical* other works, such as the writings of Pope and Addison, and of some of the French stylists, in which we could by no means discover the same characteristics.

We were puzzled, too, by the word *Romanticism*, and found that sometimes in the history of art it had been held to be the opposite of *Classicalism*. There were times, too, when we turned from the greatest works of the imagination with pleasure and content to the simple facts of daily life,—

“And that’s your Venus, whence we turn  
To yonder girl that fords the burn,”—

and we found that not only we as individuals, but art too at times made this turn, and that especially in our own day many of those who were by no means wanting in imagination had by preference depicted common scenes. At last the truth dawned on us, and we recognized that poetry is not only to be found in the far-off country of Homer, or of the Sagas, nor

again in dreams which have little to do with the realities of our life, but that it is here, about us on every side ;—that Art is no longer to be treated as is the God of certain Christians, who is brought out on the Sabbath, but on no account allowed to have a say in the affairs of the week, but something which is real, and to be sought only seek it, in our daily life, and seen in the things around us, when they are not degraded by the touch of man ;—that Walt Whitman is a poet because he is a man ;—that Shelley and Keats are already long dead.

There was a supposed contrast implied in the words *Classical* and *Romantic*, and the opposition between *Ideal* and *Naturalistic* tendencies in the art of our time. We shall, I think, find that all good art is in a certain sense *Romantic* as opposed to commonplace, and that the most *Classical* of poets, Homer, and Sophocles, and Shakespeare, are full of romance ; nor is there any opposition between true Idealism and true Naturalism ; all Idealism is false which is contrary to the realities of life, and all Naturalism is feeble and void which loses sight of the Ideals of men, for man without Ideals is but a clod indeed.

The origin of the words *Classical* and *Romantic* will perhaps give us a clue to begin with. After the Renaissance of learning the name *Classical* was applied to the art of Greece and Rome, and later to those works of modern literature which were thought to be similar in character to the masterpieces of antiquity. By some writers all that remained of Greek and

Latin art of a certain period was called Classical, and thus the commonplace inanities of later Roman sculpture in the Vatican gallery, and the poems of Ovid, were included under this description.

In France in the time of Louis XIV. canons of criticism were formulated from Classical models, or rather from the small understanding of their beauties then prevalent, and according to these canons was defined what should be allowed and what forbidden in polite literature. Later on it was discovered that the greatest of modern poets, Dante and Shakespeare, would have to be excluded, since they by no means submitted to these rules of art, and at last, as culture deepened and became less formal and scholastic, it dawned on men that these giants of later time possessed the very characteristics which made the greatness of the art of Greece and Rome, the supremacy of whose authors by no means depended on their having followed the petty rules extracted from their works by an age of short-sighted pedantry, nor merely on their scenes having been laid in lands where the gods of Olympus still ruled, at least in name.

*Romantic*, on the other hand, was derived from *roman*, *romance*; now *roman* originally meant a fabulous tale written in the Romance language of northern France; such was the *Roman de la Rose*; the same word was at a later period applied to the Celtic tales of Brittany when they came to be translated into French. Gradually the word was applied to all fantastic stories in which the realities of life were apt to be contradicted and prodigies were plentiful.

At the end of the last century in Germany the word Romantic was used specially to denote a school of literature and painting which chose its subjects chiefly from the Middle



Ages, and was imbued with sentiments which had developed in the Christian centuries, and which had been barely existent in the great age of ancient art.

A somewhat similar use of the word arose a few decades later in France, where pitched battles were fought between the revolutionary p and g them Victor Hugo and Gautier—and ti id adherence to the rules of good literati m the so-called Classical models of the a

To define ful ords would be to write a history of Fren ture from the early days of Goethe dow out we may sum up the meaning of the earing in mind that some particular appli not exactly coincide with our definition to-day. words are like men and trees, they grow, and change their aspects.

Before we proceed to define more closely what are the characteristics of Classical and Romantic Art, let us try to impress on ourselves once more that Art is not something exotic and apart from everyday life, but is only an expression of the ideas and longings which men and women find it so difficult to realize in their daily surroundings. An age feeble in intellect and cold in heart cannot produce great works of art; an age of doubt and hesitation and transition cannot produce art that is Classical; the art of each age and country is a direct expression of its character. Remembering this, and putting from us the nonsensical cry of "Art for Art's sake," the true meaning of which we will consider later on, we shall more easily find the characteristics necessary to the production of really Classical Art. These are saneness, and a sense of proportion, joined of course to a powerful imagina-

tion ; a deep-rooted enthusiasm and faith in what is good, accompanied by a wide experience and grasp of the facts of human life as a whole,—of the whole man, not of his religious ideas alone, nor of his physical life alone, nor of his fancy alone, but man living in the “sensible” world, as a part of it, and yet a creature free from its trammels by his faculty of standing sometimes outside it, “looking before and after.” We shall find, too, if we review the great products of Art, that the minds which produced them were always conspicuous for a certain *naïveté* and child-like directness, and that there is a repose and an absence of fretfulness about them, which makes them specially attractive to us to-day. Of course these characteristics must be accompanied by a very perfect mastery of expression in the material chosen, be it paint, or words, or stone. When we find these qualities combined with a rounded theory of life, as in the great age of Greece, we shall recognize most surely the full meaning of Classical ; for at times, when there is confusion in the thoughts of men, when the customs of life are in contradiction to the wisdom of its words, the artist cannot but show in his works the doubt and hesitation which is incompatible with the repose of Art which is truly Classical.

The Greek was at peace with himself and with nature ; there were mysteries he could not solve, there was a fate against which he could not prevail, but he recognized these as elements of human life, not to be forgotten, but still not destroying the harmony of Nature. He was saner than we are, and his life a more rounded whole. He did not say : “health is the first consideration,” and then arrange his life so that bodily health should be impossible. His intellect was as bright as ours, and yet he had time to train his

body and keep it in order; he would have been much astonished at our hospitals and asylums; he did not know nervousness or hysteria, and although in theory he expected no heaven beyond the grave,—only those meadows of Asphodel, where the heroes wander like the shadows of a shade,—he could face death. He was not discontented with the conditions of life. In all, he was not always questioning the world; it was only when art was falling into sophistry and the plague of self-consciousness into society, and words took the place of facts, that he rebelled with us.

And so it was that he was able to give expression to his conceptions, preserving the interwoven characteristics of Classicalism:—a sense of fitness or proportion.

In Rome this spirit, although it was not sufficiently widespread to render Classicalism possible throughout the arts, is still to be found in some of the poets; in Lucretius, in Virgil, in Horace, although much of the simplicity, the *naïveté*, the faith, the repose, is gone, there still remains enough to raise these three men of great imagination and consummate literary power to a level which has seldom been surpassed. If we examine their works we shall find that it is through the same characteristics that they exercise their power. There is a firm belief in goodness underlying even the doubt of Lucretius; along with all the pomp of Virgil, there is an affectionate sympathy with the quiet and simplicity of country life, and amidst the witty sarcasms of Horace there still appears a kindly humour and a warm heart: that all three have a wide grasp of human life, a supreme gift of imagination, a repose undisturbed by fretfulness; that all three were, in different

styles, masters of the sonorous Latin language, is universally admitted.

Succeeding the Classical period of Greece and Rome came Christianity, as a reaction against the sensuousness and luxury of a degraded Paganism, which no longer believed in Apollo and Athene, but merely in the enjoyment of the moment, and in the pleasures which power and money could procure. Laying especial stress on the spiritual faculties of man, it cultivated them to the neglect of the body, which it despised, as belonging to this earth, from which it only wished to free mankind.

Of course while this one-sided theory of life was prevalent no Classical Art was possible, and we find only several beautiful works expressing life, not as a whole, but merely giving play to various individual functions of it, without the balance of the rest,—the religious thoughts of St. Augustine, and of St. Bernard, and of St. Francis,—the love songs of the Troubadours,—the allegories of Byzantine design. At the same time the form of expression is neglected ; language was clumsy, and, till Dante, did not find a master.

Dante is once more Classical ; he is in repose, his questionings are done, he believes in the final prevalence of good, in the justice of God, in the coming of His kingdom, of these things he has no doubt ; but the contemplation of the religious truth does not make him less a citizen of Florence. He is simple, too, like the Greeks, and like all great natures. Custom,—“that monster who all sense doth eat,”—has not hardened him, he can still see nature with the eyes of a child ; he has that joy in colour, too, which only children and the pure in heart can feel. He has that measure, that restraint, which is characteristic of Greek sculpture, and of Greek and

Latin poetry when at its height. His experience of life is enormous, his imagination unequalled ; he sees the inmost heart of a man, and the true meaning of a fact, and names them with the apposite word, so that his sentences have sometimes the power of sculpture.

And yet in his poetry we are conscious of a new element unknown to us in the Classical Art of Greece and Rome, and it is this new element that is the foundation of modern Romanticism ; the difference is chiefly visible in the relation of man to God, and in the relation of man to woman. With the deepening of human personality, which was the next step onward made by humanity after the perfection of ancient Art, two things had become especially prominent in the ideas of the times,—the internal freedom and infinite possibility of the individual towards God, in spite of the limits of human life, and the change which this widened outlook had brought into the relations of man and woman ; hence, too, a certain irony or humour, a standing outside of the life of the moment and regarding it in the light of eternity ; along with this irony was developed another feeling, unknown almost to the Greeks, which has since then been called “the pleasure of melancholy,” the weakly sentimental form of which is a later product, characteristic especially of German Romanticism. In Dante it is no cause of weakness ; the melancholy of the *Vita Nuova* did not unman him, but the expression of his sorrow helped to raise him to the standpoint from which he could descry and grasp the conception of his *Commedia*.

Now these new elements of human thought are not necessarily the cause of weakness to Art ; but with them, in men less sane and rounded than Dante, they are accompanied by other weaknesses which have been confused with them by

criticism, and classed together as the characteristics of Romanticism. These weaknesses may be summed up in the one word "*Sentimentalism*," the excitement of weakly feelings which find no issue in action, which are harboured and cultivated under the pretence of beauty, or refinement, but supply no motive power to "purify the passions" or to ennoble life.

This sentimentality, which is so far removed from the spirit of Homer and the Greeks, finds its expression in all phases of life in the Middle Ages, and even in our own day. In religion it produced the monstrosities of monastic life, the asceticism of those who denied themselves from the pride of their denial, the folly of those who, professing to believe in that God who "is a spirit," waged war after war for the recovery of His grave; in daily life it led to the setting up of many false standards of honour; in love it ended in conceits only equalled by those of the seventeenth century in Italy.<sup>1</sup>

The weakness of this Romanticism arose from its placing the other world too much in opposition to, and apart from, this one, and in making its characteristics to such an extent the negation of those of nature around us here that it became empty, wanting in form and content; and when in Germany and France the name was used as a watchword in the fight against a formal Classicalism, we see the same weakness still adhering to it; it still attaches itself too much to words, too little to facts, and turning from the actual present in disgust, to seek its ideal in the Middle Ages or in some far off clime, it makes the realization of this ideal dependent on outward circumstances which are impossible *here and now*, failing to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hegel, *Aesthetik*.

see that true poetry lies near at hand, and is to be found equally in the simple Scottish life depicted by Burns as among the roses of Hafiz, or in the dragon-haunted forests of northern mystery, and that "æsthetic" surroundings are not necessary to the growth of great ideas.

The strength of Romanticism lay in its insistence on the freedom of man, and on the infinite expansiveness of the ideas of love and justice possible to him as an individual ; and the noblest products that remain to us of its early time are the *Commedia* of Dante, and the great Gothic cathedrals with their spires seeking to pierce the sky, and their porches carved with a satire on the foibles of man.

The especial weakness of Romantic Art is shared to some extent by all art. Hence, in part, arises the prejudice of the sensible, commonplace Britisher against art and artists. Finding Art so liable to exaggeration, so prone to seek its ideal anywhere but in the life of the individual here to-day, he opposes the attribution of any serious good to it, and at bottom regards it as something beneath his common sense. His prejudice has been by no means lessened by the foolish cry of "Art for Art's sake," and the vagaries of a sickly "æstheticism." For Art is after all only one form of the expression of human life, and a fine appreciation of the Old Masters is not the only way to heaven, but is compatible with a mean enough life here. These words, "Art for Art's sake," have, however, their proper meaning. Art presents truth in a different way to that used by philosophy, or moral teaching, or religion, and is in no wise the servant of any of these. A thing of beauty suffers no derogation from its loveliness because it does not convey a theological doctrine, or a moral idea ; it has not to repeat the Ten Commandments,

but to represent nature and human relations as seen through a medium of pure emotion, by means of sound and form and colour. It attains to truth, but not in the form of a proposition, and its strength is lost as soon as it becomes directly didactic; it is precisely because it speaks immediately to the heart of man that its influence is at times so much more powerful than creed or written law, and indeed it is the creator of that mythology without which creed and law have had small influence on the mass of mankind. It has often been objected to the worshippers of art that men of action are superior to men of sentiment; that the true hero does not sing but act; that "nations first achieve great things; when that energy is gone, they sing them." If this means that nowadays there are many of us who live too much in books, and pride ourselves on our sympathy with what is great and noble in art instead of on any noble energy in our own lives, there is little to object to it; but that is precisely the weakness of false Romanticism, from which many suffer who never heard the name, and is no ground of accusation against "divine poetry." For Dante could proudly say in a time of his city's trouble: "And if I go, who stays?"; Æschylus fought at Marathon, and Sophocles was chosen to offer sacrifice to the gods after the victory of Salamis. Aristotle was a friend of Alexander, and Cæsar dictated his own *Commentaries*.

Another cause of the distrust of art is to be found in the wide-spread hatred of the vulgar for all genius which they cannot understand; this arises from their being conscious that in some way or other, which is not clear to them, genius has an advantage over them after all, although they can never suppose that a flash of it is worth more than all their material advantages.



We saw that there were characteristics of Classical Art which we found again in Dante, along with certain additions of thought and emotion which were the growth of the Christian centuries, but which in no wise in themselves contradicted its true spirit, so long as they did not monopolize all interest, but were harmoniz

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of action, not of l, his love was real, and his hate real too; his justice, his honour, his human sympathy were not so many robes put on when he appeared before the public; and on those his human qualities, not on the circles of the *Inferno*, which are often no more than stage apparatus, depends the force of his poetry.

In France the age of Louis XIV. claims for its literature the title of Classical; its right to the name is sometimes founded on the fact that its tragic poets were apt to treat subjects from Greek or Roman history, attributing to their characters supposed heroic sentiments, and submitting in the arrangement of their plays to the three unities which the criticism of their time supposed to contain the chief secret of the power of the ancient drama. And yet, beyond these merely accidental resemblances, it seems to me that the literature of that time has, amidst the rest of French literature, the right to be called Classical. The French never, of course,

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equalled the imaginative force of the Greek or English poets, or of Dante; and yet in Montaigne and Molière and Montesquieu, in the letters of Madame de Sevigné, and in some of the plays of Corneille and Racine, there are human qualities, accompanied by directness and elegance of expression, a reserve, a repose, a simplicity, even in the midst of the hollow ceremonies and heartless courtesy of the Court of the *Grand Monarque*, which entitle them to a place, if not a very high one, on the Parnassus of Classical Art.

In Shakespeare, as in Dante, we find the characteristics of Classic and Romantic Art blended in their strength; he seems to realize the conception of the Platonic Socrates, of one who should unite tragedy and comedy. Faith in the triumph of good, repose, health, which enables him to "touch pitch" and yet be undefiled, imagination, directness of feeling, sympathy with what is noblest in man, a power of clear and concise expression unparalleled in our language, experience of life so wide and deep that it has been said that were the world destroyed to-morrow it could be recreated as it was from a knowledge of his plays alone: these are the qualities which place him among the Classical poets of all time, and make us forget such minor faults as the play on words, the love of a pun in the wrong place, the ceaseless shifting of scene in some of his plays, which he shared with the other dramatists of his day. Whether he lays his scene in Rome, or in England, or in Italy, his characters are men and women of his day, and the effect of the scenery is only very subsidiary. It is not the pomp and luxury of Egypt which moves us in *Anthony and Cleopatra*, but the power of her who tamed even Cæsar; it is not the city of Lagunes and of the Byzantine-Gothic palaces which charms and interests us in the *Mer-*

*chant of Venice*, but the sweet womanliness of Portia and the greed of the Jew; and even in his most phantastic scenes in *The Tempest*, in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Titania and Ariel,—even “dainty Ariel,”—are human in the red blood of the heart, suggesting to each of us some trait of a woman we have known.

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characters; but Spencer's real weakness lies in his eternal allegory, and the usurpation by it of the first place, which belongs by right to poetic imagination; and yet he is at times classical, through the pure simplicity of his conception, through the repose and faith of his mind, joined to such a perfect mastery of his English tongue.

It has been the fashion to talk of the literature of the end of the seventeenth and of the eighteenth century in England as being Classical; it is true that it possesses some of the outward characteristics which would justify its name,—reserve, repose, style,—but it cannot be classed along with Dante and Shakespeare; it fails through want of passion, imagination, enthusiasm, force. Its reserve is the reserve of narrow experience, its repose is the dulness of commonplace life, its style is the result of polish, not of vigorous thought. Occasionally, of course, there is a man behind it; in Dryden's *All for Love* there are passages which may rank with the

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best of Elizabethan literature, and his prose and the prose of Defoe is comparable to that of the best of the great prose writers of France.

The real home of false Romanticism is in Germany; here the language was too clumsy to admit of classical expression in literature, and the later development of refinement among the masses, and the pride and pedantry of the upper class, caused poetry to assume a sentimental ideal. I do not, of course, assert that there is no good writing to be found in the prose of Lessing, or no poetry in *Faust*, or in the lyrics of Goethe and Heine; but I maintain that they have never had a prose writer to be named along with Pascal, or Montesquieu, or Dryden,—that all the *Moors* and *Werthers*, and even *Wallensteins* and *Egmonts*, do not express as much tragedy as is contained in one play of the Greeks, or of Shakespeare,—that there is more reality in the *Sturm und Drang* of Byron than in all their literature of the last half of the eighteenth century, and more true sentiment in the small volume of the poems of Keats than in a library full of Jean Paul, Novalis, and the Schlegels. In painting the Germans have seldom shown a sense of colour, for they cannot claim those superb colourists among the old masters, Van Eyck and Memling, who belong to the Low Countries. The greatest name among German painters is surely that of Albrecht Dürer, yet nowhere is real insensibility to beauty, combined with high intellectual power, more prominent than in his drawings of the human body; the melancholy of this Lucretius of the Reformation was not tempered by the repose and the artistic power which the great Roman poet possessed in such high degree, in spite of his theoretical despair. Dürer moves rigidly onward, like his own *Knight*, hemmed in by ever present Death and Sin, who

allow not of his escape into the freedom of Art. His motto, as Mr. Ruskin has remarked, is "labour and sorrow." The strength and nobility of his purpose none can fail to see, but it is not by such expression as he gave to it that we are helped to escape from the overwhelming sense of the misery and the weakn

It is in music and sentimental of the arts, that the themselves to be capable of great things, goes by the name of Classical music de- ve my doubts; it seems to me that in music even of Mozart and Beethoven the which are harsh and ugly, and that cleve ions of notes often usurp the place of t of earlier style. But in some of the com music of Bach and of Handel, and in the freer composition of the sonatas of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, in the songs and phantasies of Schubert and Schumann, they rise to the level of truly Classical art.

Romanticism in Germany was the child of the *Sturm und Drang* and of the newly-aroused interest in the literature of nations other than the Greek and Roman, to whom Herder had drawn attention in his *Stimmen der Voelker*, and was an attempt to seek, in the Middle Ages and the East, a freedom of thought and sentiment which the petty conditions of prosaic German life seemed to exclude. In France the romantic spirit was pushed into vigour by the same force which produced the Revolution. After '89 Classicism in the old sense was no longer possible; the larger life of the nation could not be represented within the narrow, formal rules which had sufficed for the inane courtiers of the preceding century. It was, perhaps, Madame de Staël who

brought the name from Germany, and it seemed made to fit something difficult to define, and as varied as a chameleon in the art of the time.

Alfred de Musset has amusingly described the search made by two provincial friends after a definite meaning to attach to Romanticism. For the word was applied to works of very different genius, and it was not at first easy to determine that their common weakness was unreality and false sentiment. For Romantic was the epithet applied to the sentimentalism of Chateaubriand, who sought in *Réné* and *Atala* to give evidence of a nobility of nature which he did not possess;—to the exotic beauties of Gautier, and his pursuit of “Art for Art’s sake,” which ended in trifling, like that of a collector of *bibelots*;—to the bombast and verbosity of Victor Hugo, which obscured, and still obscures, from so many the real poetry of his conceptions,—to his love of the Middle Ages, witness his chapters on *Notre Dame*,—to his choice of the subjects of Spanish chivalry,—to his dwelling on what is extravagant, or even ugly, as in his description of Gilliat’s fight with the cuttle-fish, or of the torture of Quasimodo,—in his daring to take for heroes types never thought of, or excluded with repugnance by former art,—in his boldly showing the beauty and nobility compatible with even deformity and meanness of birth, as in Quasimodo and Ruy Blas.

Perhaps the most successful scene in *Notre Dame de Paris* is the wonderful picture of Quasimodo bearing off Esmeralda from the gibbet, and turning round defiantly on the steps of the great cathedral with the cry of “*Asile!*” made beautiful for the moment by the triumph of heroism.

With us the reaction against the narrowness of the so-called Classicalism of the eighteenth century took rather



strength of northern character, seen and felt in their own time, that give life to their creations of heroes and lovers.

There are, however, two examples in our literature of the beginning of the century to which the name Romantic is more specially applicable; I mean those novels of Scott in which the scene is laid in the Middle Ages, and in which there is an amount of lengthy description of the pageants and costumes of the time, seldom read to-day, and far out of proportion to the assistance it renders to the characterization of the scene or of the actors; there is a false ring in these which we willingly forget when we are met by the Scottish good sense and kindly humour which prevented him entirely losing himself in an artificial past.

The other instance is presented by a group of poems, differing as much in artistic merit as in outward form, of which I may cite as types the *Queen Mab*, *The Revolt of Islam*, by Shelley; and *Heaven and Earth*, *The Corsair*, and *Cain*, by Byron.

In these, as in the Romantic poetry of France and Germany, there is the same attempt to escape from the bonds of present necessity by the creation of a fantastic world in which the conditions of human life are in abeyance; and it is precisely in proportion to the inhumanity of these strange conceptions that they are lifeless and void. It is not because the characters are called by the names of angels and demons, or because they inhabit No-land,—Dante has shown us that he can people Heaven and Hell with realities,—but because they are outside the laws of human nature as it is, or as it might be, that they do not appeal to us. Not that Byron or Shelley could write anything wholly devoid of a touch of nature; still, in the poems mentioned, and to a less degree in passages



in their more perfect works,—in *Alastor*, in *Prometheus*, in *Lara*,—there is here and there an unreality, a sound of empty words: the difference such poetry shows from true idealism is easier to feel than to define. I can only suggest a comparison with the *Prometheus* or with the *Eumenides* of Æschylus, in which the gods are portrayed without the poet losing sight of the unbridled phantasy or of exaggerated sentiment.

I suppose that the poet who repels a larger section of the public by his unreality and Romanticism than Dr. Johnson did by his criticism is often inclined to consider exaggeration of sentiment or exuberance of imagination as a necessary element in his poems as *The White Ship*, *The King's Tragedy*, *The Blessed Damozel*; and it seems to me that those who are unacquainted with the meaning of the *Blessed Damozel* will hardly be credited when they pretend to an appreciation of Juliet or Ophelia. *The House of Life*, and such poems as *The Portrait*, *Spherical Change*, *The Stream's Secret*, stand, along with Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, as containing a greater depth of real feeling antecedent to the love of man and woman, clearly expressed, than any other lyrical poems in our language. They express the Romance and truth of this passion as it is only to be found elsewhere in music.

When we look round us at the art of to-day, we find the watchwords have changed; there is no longer a revolt against so-called Classicalism, and an army of Romanticists, with mail of the Middle Ages or red waistcoats of the Revolution, ready to devour any lover of the antique. Instead of these, we have a crowd of painters and writers who seem to have taken their notions of beauty from the products of photo-

graphy, and to be unconscious that before them men ever looked at nature at all.

The reaction is natural enough; after the pedantry of a Classicalism which would confine Art to narrow rules of expression, and the empty phantasmagorias which some Romanticists gave us for poetry, and the childish designs which the German pre-Raphaelites provided for their public, men turned once more to nature, to nature no longer seen through eyes dulled by academic study, not even to nature as seen by the painters of the fifteenth century in Italy,—this was but a step on the way,—but to nature as she is around us here still to-day, if we will only open our eyes to see her; it is to her we turn when oppressed by custom and “society”:

“Go forth to her from the dark and the dust,  
And weep beside her if weep thou must;  
If she may not hold thee to her breast  
Like a weary infant that cries for rest,  
At least she will press thee to her knee,  
And tell a low, sweet tale to thee,  
Till the hue to thy cheek and delight to thine eye,  
Strength to thy limbs, and courage high  
To thy fainting heart return amain,  
And away to work thou goest again.  
From the narrow desert, O man of pride,  
Come into the house so high and wide.”

In their attempts at art the Romanticists had sought in a past which is for ever gone an idealism which they could not find in the world about them. The pomps and pageants and picturesque costumes of the Middle Ages or of the East, the supernaturalism of northern legend, with its dragons, and goblins, and Wartburg, and Walhalla, seemed alone to be a proper background for what they thought was noble and

ideal. In England our country life and our sense of humour had preserved us from the greater pedantry of the foreign Classicists and the empty sentimentalism of foreign Romance; and in England, too, the return to nature was more human and less full of exaggeration; Wordsworth and Rousseau, the one the poet of prosaic, the other of sentimental natures, exemplify the difference between French and English ways of regarding nature, and there is nothing in *La Nouvelle Heloise* so sweetly unaffected and appreciative of natural beauty as the "Lines written at Tintern," or "Nutting."

All art, all philosophy, all religion, is in a sense the attempt of man to escape from the limits of his inheritance and surroundings; but the highest idealism in art, as the purest spirit of religion, seeks its beauty and the exercise of its functions here and now; neither the one nor the other can find in a phantastic, far-off heaven, the satisfaction of its longing, and as it is only by living up to the highest inspiration of religion here that we can have a sight of heaven on earth, so it is only by seeking beauty in the world about him that the artist can embody before our eyes an ideal which is satisfying and which can fill our lives.

As with the words *Classical* and *Romantic*, so here we have to consider *Naturalist* and *Idealist* in their better meaning and as they are used by the *vulgus*. The latter is apt to take naturalistic to mean true, and ideal to mean false, to human experience; seeing only the outside aspect of nature and the commonplace facts of human life, it is blind to the deeper truths and stronger emotions, which are of as small import to it as Hecuba or Troy Town. The man whose god is "getting on" cannot see the tragedy of Mazzini's life, nor the heroism of the Spartans at Thermopylæ; the man whose

chief enjoyment is found twice a day at table is hardly likely to have an eye for the truths of Turner, or an ear for the beauty of Schumann's songs; the man who seeks in woman merely a means to gratify sensual desire, or in marriage merely an alliance bringing him money or position, soon loses, if he ever possessed it, the faculty by which to recognize the truths of *Epipsychidion*, or *The House of Life*.

But the proper use of the words corresponds to a real difference in works of art, not only of our own day, but of the past. Mr. Ruskin<sup>1</sup> has pointed out the division of Italian painters into those who may be called *Purists*, who in their representation of human life pursue the good and leave out the evil, failing often of truth from errors of judgment; among these he places Fra Angelico, Perugino, Francia. And again, those who render all that they see in nature, sympathizing with what is good, and yet showing evil where it occurs,—Giotto, Tintoret, Michael Angelo, Leonardo da Vinci,—these he calls *Naturalists*.

As Romanticism went too far in its reaction against the cold formalities of a false and narrow Classicalism, and revelled in an unreal world of lawless phantasy, so the Naturalists of late years have over-shot the mark, and basing their work on the assumption that here or nowhere is the sphere of our activity, have declared any bit of actuality to be worth having. They seem to proclaim that everything in nature is a fit subject for art, and to try to "justify the ways of God to man" by finding everything to be good. The expression of this error is to be found in a great number of modern French pictures, and is remarkable in the earlier poems of Walt Whitman. It was indeed a great achievement to show the beauty of

<sup>1</sup> *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. p. 101.

common things around us, the loveliness of simple human feelings among the humble of mankind, the love that is present, not only in moments when life seems to be fused in the fire of passionate emotion, but also in "every day's most quiet need." In *The Daisy*, *The Celandine*, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, *She walked among the untrodden ways*, Burns and Wordsworth have shown that it is possible for Art to occupy itself with simple objects of Nature. But we cannot blind ourselves to the hideousness of much that is about us. The rubbish at the mouth of the coal-pit, the slums of Shoreditch, the brutality of the slaughter-house, are not good subjects of Art, except so far as they are shown to us as blots on the face of nature which it is man's business to erase. The life of a common thief or murderer is not in itself good, or worthy of artistic treatment, as some of these moderns would have us believe. That man has something in him by which he can rise above the misery of disease does not make disease good in the sense that health is good ; that stone walls do not "make a prison nor iron bars a cage" is no proof that walls and bars are as fair to look upon as the blue profundity of heaven, or the rippling laughter of the summer sea.

Among modern painters there are two distinct classes of Naturalists ; the one finds any subject fit for painting or description, and is apt to be careless of finish, giving to the world a sketch of a cabbage-field for a picture, or a study of a cheesemonger's stall as a harmony in yellows. The other comprises men very different from the first in power of thought and technique, men such as Gerome and Tadema, who attain sometimes to great beauty of line and colour ; it is, however, the outer shell of nature that they present to us after all, although with far greater choice of subject, skill of

execution, and care of finish. On the other hand, we have those who, adhering no less closely to nature than they, yet seeing the infinite possibilities of man, and sympathizing with the deeper emotions which are excited by natural scenery, use the outer forms to express human love and devotion, honour and endurance, and the misery that is entailed by the suppression of the same. These are the *poetai*, the creators who give new life to the men of their time, and raise the beacon of man's noble aspirations once more to view when he is lost in a slough of commonplace vulgarity. To this group belong, in our own day and country, Watts and Rossetti, and Millais in his landscapes, in sculpture, above all, Alfred Gilbert. In France Puvis de Chavannes and Millet, in Italy Morello and Costa. I would class with these men others who, though they have not such a wide grasp of life, yet see truly what they do see, and render it faithfully and with devotion: the painters of the Barbazon school in France, and such men as Bastien Lepage, Alfred Stevens, Edelfelt, and, in his latest pictures, Roll; in England Prout, Copley Fielding, and, in a strange way, Whistler; in Italy Michetti, in Spain Graner Yaruffé.

When I say that those adhere no less closely to nature than the Naturalists or Realists, I must admit of course that they often sacrifice the rendering of some petty external detail to the fuller expression of the feelings they wish to convey. They present to us the most important among the facts of nature which they observe in their subjects, whereas the first-named are more apt to convey to us the more trivial details. These men, some of whom would usually be classed among the Naturalists from their preference of out-door subjects, are careful in their choice of subject, and, although as

true to nature as any, by no means find every natural object to be fit for representation in art. They seek nature as keenly as the rawest Naturalists, but they are mindful that the light which gilds the minarets in the purple haze over the Golden Horn is as natural as the gas-lamps of a Parisian *boulevard*.

Among them (conspicuous for the care with which they external details of their subjects, without delight of such work the greater truths the g. I mean the founders of the pre-Raphael England. These turned from the manner y, which had gradually gathered into a from the later time of Raphael, and so had been seen by the earlier painters,—by Perugino, by Masaccio, by Lippo Lippi; and although they can paint you a foreground with such truth and care as had not been seen since the days of Cima and Carpaccio, yet we shall find that these men—Holman Hunt and Millais—do not on this account fail in the expression of thought and feeling. I am not now speaking of the many portraits and pictures painted for purposes of illustration which Millais has produced to suit the taste of the million and to catch the guineas of the millionaire, but of his so-called pre-Raphaelite pictures, and of his landscapes.

Among modern poets who have shown us how Naturalism and Idealism can be harmonized by a master's hand are Robert Browning, Tennyson, and Rossetti. Touches of accurate observation of nature, and love of the minor beauties of her surface, so abound in the works of these poets that quotation of them is superfluous.

But although, as I have tried to show, Realism and Ideal-

ism in the best sense are not antagonistic, yet the common opposition of the two is founded on human fact. Mankind is ever divided into two classes,—into those whose eyes are always bent on the present and its meaner wants, and those others who are apt to neglect their material advantages for what their opponents call an idea or fancy. The first lead excellently sensible lives, and have what enjoyment their natures are capable of, but all that is noble and sublime in human nature is hidden from them; the others, who are capable of great deeds and high thoughts, are apt to run-a-muck of petty obstacles in practical life which their common-sense neighbours avoid, and which prove them conclusively to be but fools to those whose motto is “getting on.” The first class, as Schiller<sup>1</sup> has remarked, have nothing great or noble about them, for such qualities grow only on a soil of freedom, whereas our practical commonplace people are bound hand and foot by the customs of their neighbours, and cannot be said to have any independent life of their own. On the other hand, the faults of the Idealist are patent to all, for just as intellectually he is inclined to neglect facts, so in practice he is apt to leave out of account some part of experience which should have modified his action. The life of the Realist is more even, and his faults less conspicuous, for all men share them; the faults of the Idealist are more obvious, owing to the height from which he falls, and at which, owing to the surroundings of daily life and his own inheritance, it is impossible for him constantly to walk. “The Idealist pays with his own person and with material sacrifice for the faults of

<sup>1</sup> In these, as in the following remarks on *Nature*, I have occasionally paraphrased the words of Schiller in his essay on *Naïve und Sentimental Dichtung*.



his system, but he regards not such fines; the Realist pays for his by the degradation of his own personality, but of this he is unconscious; his system secures for him everything of which he has knowledge, and what matter to him the good things of whose existence he has no conception? He is in possession of the earth, and all that it shows to him, and he is as content as material success can make a man. The Idealist has no such fortune; in the first place, he often misses material success and comfort from not being a time-server, but his discontent arises far oftener from his incapacity to realize his high thoughts, and because he is conscious of his own failure. He demands something which is infinite, and from the conditions of his nature is limited in his attainments. He is at bottom more generous to others because he is less mindful of self, but he is more severe to any meanness than the Realist, because his standard is higher. The latter can forgive everything except originality, whereas the Idealist can put up with much in a man as long as he gives signs of force in any direction. The one may be a philanthropist without having any high conception of mankind, the other is not unapt to hate his fellows because of his high idea of the possibilities that are in man."

The reason of the reaction shown by Rousseau in France and by the Lake School of poetry in England, both of whom were of course only representative of a widespread feeling of their time, is not far to seek. Man has in him still a longing for what is simple, and peaceful, and strong, and when it is no longer embodied in his so-called civilization, he seeks it outside himself, where it is still to be found. We are apt to marvel at missing in the Greeks that kind of love of Nature which the authors above-named emphasized, but the Greeks in their

own lives were not so far separated from her. It is not the healthy who talk about health, but those who are sick. *They* were a part of Nature, and joyful in her harmony, *we* desire her as one whom we have lost: "*They* felt naturally, we have a sentiment for Nature." That the Greeks saw the beauties of Nature is not to be doubted—the epithets applied by Homer and by Æschylus to the sky, to the mountains, to the sea, suffice to prove this. But the Greeks lived: they did not merely think about life and ask under what circumstances it could be "worth living;" they, too, saw the beauties of Nature, but as their lives were active and beautiful, they had no need to seek to escape from themselves into the freedom of health which to us she alone seems to preserve.

Owing to this close kinship with Nature, this sanity, and to the Classicalism of their Art, of which it was the condition, it seems short-sighted to deny to the study of Greek the chief place which it has hitherto occupied in higher education. When we have attained to equal harmony of life, when our art is as full of beauty and our language as expressive as theirs, then it will be time enough to discard them as models.

Another reason for there being less talk about Nature in Greek literature than in our own, is that many of her aspects were embodied in the Olympian Gods. The old gods of the Aryan race were to a great extent personifications of natural forces; it is true that in later Greek mythology this is partly forgotten, but never altogether so, and the arrows of Apollo, and the Aegis of Athene, have still a natural significance. Demeter and Persephone were still definitely connected with the earth, and Apollo and Athene with the sun and the sky, even in the age of the tragic poets and of Pheidias, although no doubt this connection was more explicitly insisted on in

the mysteries than in the Greek religion as presented to us by Art.

That modern life is not picturesque ; that the beauties of it are not expressed in its outward surroundings, that our dress is ridiculous, our decoration barbarous and overladen, our luxuries sought more because they demonstrate wealth than because they are good or beautiful, our churches affected monstrosities, and our streets fit for slums, is obvious. We cannot even move decently,—look at the walk of a German officer, or of one of our ten thousand, among whom, if anywhere, we shall, I suppose, be likely to find better physique ; look at the pale faces, and the early lines in them, of that nation in whom we hope as giving the promise of the future, and as being more free from the trammels of custom than we are ; look at our cities and their hopeless “civilization,” and at the signs on every side that where man approaches, natural beauty retreats before him, and the conclusion is not far to seek that our increased sentiment for natural beauty is due to our daily life being so far removed from the directness, the spontaneity, the ease of Nature in her less self-conscious developments,—in men of earlier ages, in plants and animals, in the elements of earth and sky.

Thus it is that we, who are surpassed at every point by the Greeks in real sympathy with Nature, yet appear to worship her with greater love : “it is because Nature has departed from our daily lives, that we must seek her where our hands have not yet defiled her.” We turn to Nature as we turn to a child, recognizing in both the capabilities which custom has crushed in ourselves, the freshness and joy which we are too *blasts* to feel. Who can sing of Nature with greater sweetness than poor Leopardi, the conclusion of whose philosophy is

that she is deaf to his cry; even amid the glorious spring of his *Risorgimento* what is deepest in him still exclaims: "*chè la natura è sorda, chè miserar non sa.*" The Greek regarding himself as part of Nature did not thus cry to her to save him from himself.

But this return to Nature is the strength of modern art. It is no longer sentimental as it was in the days of Schiller, and as we find it in Chateaubriand and in Heine, in whom it resembles the philanthropy of those who visit the poor of London with their carriage and pair, and footman on the box, but more real and life giving, as in Walt Whitman. If you will recall the passages in modern literature which remain to you from amid the mass of trifling words with which you have plagued yourselves in the attempt to attain "culture," you will find that one half of them contain representations of natural objects, and the other half the outburst of direct human passion in its strength at moments when it is regardless of "civilization;" it is indeed only when one or other of these two phases of nature, nature outside, or nature in the heart of man, comes to have free play, that a picture, or a poem, touch you and me to-day.

We are attracted by the art of Greece and even by the barbaric remains of Egypt and Assyria, because they embody qualities which we have to some degree lost, because they are more in harmony with Nature, because they are the work of men who have not set up a God outside and beyond Nature, and are proud of the subjection of natural desires, and look for a heaven in which the conditions of life, as far as definitely conceived by them, seem to be simply the negations of the conditions in which we live here.

We are fascinated by the beauties of Greek art as we are

affected by the beauty of a healthy dog, or horse, or plant, yet we would exchange our place with none of these. Our path cannot turn backwards. The higher spiritual possibilities, which have caused slavery to be abolished, which have given rights to the oppressed, which have set women in the position they occupy to-day, which have made us see a beauty in the patient suffering even of disease itself, are incompatible with a struggle for existence which leads to a development of physique and intellect alone. We cannot try to attain health for another generation by killing off all who are diseased to-day. We cannot even imitate the institutions of a healthier age. We must work out our own salvation, first learning what was really strong and helpful in the life of simpler times, which are gone for ever, and distinguishing what there is of good in our own civilization :

"In the name of these states shall I scorn the antique?  
Why, these are the children of the antique to justify it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Regarding it all intently a long while, then dismissing it,  
I stand in my place with my own day here."

We require above all things health and balance in place of the luxury of modern life, and until we can harmonize our lives into a rounded whole, as the Greeks did, we shall be incapable of art which has the repose, the moderation, the simplicity, the peace and yet the passion, which are characteristic of the highest Classical work.

One outcome of the Naturalistic tendency of modern art is the growth of the Novel. The origin of stories told in prose, with the object of beguiling *ennui*, reaches back to the East. Even among the Greeks in a later age, when men had lost the simplicity of earlier times, and had no longer an ear

for the inspired songs in which the deeds of Achilles and the sufferings of Ulysses were sung, their authors tried to amuse them with prosaic tales full of incident and sentiment.

In modern times, stories in which fictitious sentiment and adventure take the place of poetry come to us from Italy and France. Chaucer, by his natural poetry, raised some of them to a higher level. In France in the seventeenth century, the place of these *contes* was taken by such stories as *Le Grand Cyrus* and *Clitè*, and soon after England saw the birth of the modern novel. Richardson and Smollett provided food for a prosaic generation. The tendency of the novel is to abide by a description of the pettier details of life, by conversations about nothing between individuals incapable of thought, the plot being as a rule "a plain tale, mostly of love," and the end the death of the hero amid harrowing circumstances, or the "happiness" which ever after followed the attainment of his desires. These characteristics the novel still keeps. Like the opera *bouffe*, the London stage play, and for another class, the music hall, it supplies the demand of common-place natures in their hours of *ennui*. Hence its success as literature of the railway train and the sick room.

Not but what there have been many attempts to raise the novel to a place among works of art, but the prosaic material which belongs to it by tradition, and the demand of the larger and grosser public for incident and excitement even at the price of a murder, makes it difficult for its authors to lift it into a higher atmosphere; and scenes of deep passion and tragedy are apt to seem out of place in it. The famous love scene in "Through One Administration" seems hardly fit for the naturalism of prose.

And yet there are scenes of pathetic interest and of poetic

imagination which seem to counterbalance much of its dry commonplace. In parts of *The Heart of Midlothian* and of *The Bride of Lammermoor*, of *Adam Bede*, of *Lorna Doone*, in the wonderful scene on the Lagoon at the beginning of *Beauchamp's Career*, in many a story by George Sand and by Victor Hugo, and latest of all in *Pêcheur d'Islande*, there is true poetry, and characters and places are presented with an artistic force of which their authors would probably have been incapable in verse. These, however, are the exceptions which prove the rule, and show the poets. These are really examples of poetry without the accompaniment of rhyme and verse, and are certainly not characteristic of the modern novel taken as a whole. Even the authors mentioned have to sacrifice much to their public, and can hardly give us a complete work without the spice of violent incident, and the padding of commonplace description. In late years there has been a tendency to make the analysis of character take the place of incident, yet even Meredith and Balzac have hardly escaped the desire of the public for thrilling excitement, which makes its less educated classes buy the *Police News*.

The faults inherent in the novel remain :—sentimentality, sensationalism, and commonplace naturalism. Now it may be true in a sense that there is a tragedy in every death-bed, and as I have tried to show, the strength of modern art lies in seeking its ideal in the surroundings of present human life, and in nature, which is about us on every side ; yet these simple facts must be presented to us as seen by the eyes of a seer, and fused in the fire of poetic imagination, else they remain lifeless as the puppets of a marionette show, or as the photograph, of which the narrow likeness to life suggests nothing but the limits of individualism.

There is an obvious external cause for the growth of the novel: it is so easy to many people who have nothing particular to say, no idea which forces itself to expression, no sight of beauty which they cannot contain, to write a description of the ways of common life, interspersed with sarcasms on society, which finds a public among those to whom there is a pleasure in the mere imitation of externals. And so they turn an honest penny. Scott, in his later days, Trollope, Ouida, Wilkie Collins have ground out story after story, and earned their guineas from a public which has not energy to amuse itself, but requires a constant means of distraction.

It has been said that most of that which now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by Art. This in a sense is true, but it will occur to everyone that no great art was ever possible except when there was a living spirit of religion, and that the practical philosophy of Sophocles, or of Dante, or of Shakespeare, has perhaps as good a right to the name, as the formal systems of German metaphysicians. Already to many of us, poetry gives expression to that faculty of man "which found its satisfaction before in the contemplation of the divine image, or in the ecstasy of prayer."

The art of ancient Greece so closely intertwined with the religion, which was after all one of its own creations, presented a series of types of noble humanity, and showed the conflict of man against fate, against the hostile god, against Nemesis, or against iron necessity, and the victory of man was secured by his limiting himself; *μὲν αὖ γὰρ* is its watchword, and sculpture the most perfect form of its expression.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hegel. *Ästhetik*.



The art of the Middle Ages shows us the fight of man against phantastic objects, giants, dragons, sorcerers, embodying the evil powers of self and others; these man subdues by his honour, love, and faith.

Modern art has to show the individual at war with all these enemies, a inheritance and by the medium in which His fight is with sins of his fathers, inhered in the narrow vacancy of civilized society of family and of daily duties, in the watches; man conquers by individual character he ends only with his death. Such art is off world of phantastic adventure, and yet it be far different to that of the common ending of "happiness ever after," forgetful is when the goal of success, or love, or fortune is attained that the man has to show of what stuff he is made.

Greek art was perfect because of its limits; to us in art, as in life, these limits have been widened, but the attainment of freedom and of repose, is on that account more difficult:

"You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am?  
 Even so you will not sit like Theseus.  
 You would prove a model? The son of Priam  
 Has yet the advantage in arms and knees' use.  
 You're wroth—can you slay your snake like Apollo?  
 You're grieved, still Niobe's the grander!  
 You live, there's the Racer's frieze to follow,  
 You die, there's the dying Alexander.  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 Growth came, when, looking your last on them all  
 You turned your eye inwardly one fine day.  
 And cried with a start—what if we so small  
 The greater and grander the while than they,

Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature,  
In both, of such lower types are we,  
Precisely because of our wider nature."

What, then, are the possibilities of Art in the future? And what are the conditions of the greatness which belongs to it in its master-pieces in past time? Art is the expression of life; the forms Classical and Romantic, the style of the Idealist and the Naturalist arise from the character of the personality which it seeks to convey. In old days it sought to show the nobility of man, and the loveliness of Nature in her various forms, and that in such a way, that they could be appreciated by a large public, who by freshness of mind and tenderness of heart, but without any specially "æsthetic" culture, were moved by the rhapsodies of Homer, or by the sculpture of Pheidias. Much of the best art of our day appeals to a very limited public, and one of the next results of Naturalism must be to make it of wider-spread acceptance. De Musset has suggested that no art is very great unless it gains the admiration, both of the most refined among living men, and of the wider public too. This was certainly the case with the art of the Greeks, and is true of Dante and Shakespeare; it seems to be true, too, of really great works of architecture, such as the remains of Egypt and Assyria, and the Gothic cathedrals; these impress the multitude. There will always be beauties in great art, appreciable only by the nobler spirits among men; in the *Commedia*, or in *Hamlet*, there are passages which speak not to the multitude; but the tendency to address a limited audience of culture is to-day no sign of strength in art; it is an element of weakness in even such men as Browning, Rossetti, and Burne-Jones.

another genius adds a new note to those of the musicians who have gone before, let us welcome him as the nightingale in spring, for it is such song which is to be our mainstay amid the prose of life :

**"The rest may reason, and welcome,  
'Tis we musicians know."**

The art to which we look will no longer seek an ideal far away from us, but in the hearts of men, and in Nature, in which they live: its realism will be no mere deceptive imitation of the external characteristics of its objects; it will remember that "there may be as much greatness of mind, as much nobility of manner, in a master's treatment of the smallest features, as in the management of the most vast; and this greatness of manner chiefly consists in his seizing on the specific character of an object, together with all the great qualities of beauty which it has in common with other

orders of existence, while he utterly rejects the meaner beauties which are accidentally peculiar to it."

No one will claim for Mr. Ruskin the title of a great painter, but there is more true Art, and higher, shown in a shell or a leaf drawn by him, than in a portrait by Carolus Durand, or by Bonnat; in the same way the granite lions of old Egypt are not only more beautiful, but more truly lions than the last piece of modern brutality by Fremiet. And while it seeks the beauty that is in common things, and while it portrays the highest ideals of the human mind, Art will remember that it has conventions, a special language through which it must speak if it would be understood, and that painting is no more the simple imitation of the exterior of natural objects, than music is the imitation of natural sounds. Each art is limited by the convention, arising from the struggle between what it has to express, and the material in which it works: poetry has to sacrifice a certain amount of freedom to the exigencies of rhyme and metre, music to the harmony of the notes whether simultaneous or successive, sculpture to the material which it uses, architecture to the purpose of the buildings which it erects. The master in each art, however, is not hampered by these conventions, but recognizing them and taking them up into himself, he fills them with life and meaning, so that they change under his touch from formal laws, imposed by the authority of experience, into a living style which is to him a means of fuller expression.

There is a line in Shakespeare to which few of us attach a very definite meaning, and yet which possesses an inexpressible charm,—witness the frequency of its citation:—"the soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come."

May it not be that what is good and true and lovely is, after all, the "soul of the world," and that the beauties of inanimate nature, of vegetation, of animals, of man's body and mind, charm us because they, each of them, express a part of this "soul of the world"? It is by virtue of our share in this that we "live in our being"; without it or in the negation of it, we seem at times to be a closer sympathy with Nature than is allowed for in the common thought; as Walt Whitman says, the human is in the scale of organic Nature, which is a part of himself.

It may be, that the intellect is not the criterion of truth; man's truth is that which he knows only dimly as he knows Nature, which is his better guide at times. It is not seldom that argument even of the individual with himself, merely obscures facts. That this is especially the case with women is obvious; they act rightly, so long as they act directly: let them begin to reason, and no one can then foretell what they will do.

Perhaps in this century of theory and analysis, we might do better in being content to know that Art presents to us directly this "soul of the world," discovering to us the spirit of a tree, or of a flower, or of a cloud, grasping their inmost nature by the touch of the artist's soul. I care not if this is called mysticism; there are truly more things known to us in our experience than mere intellect can account for, and all poetry, all religion is mystical in the sense of dealing with objects beyond the reach of logical analysis. Mere science has to base itself on unproved and constantly modifiable hypothesis; shall not a similar liberty be allowed to the higher faculties of man, whose harmony or discord with that

which lies about him, is more deep-rooted than the associations of his mere individuality can account for.

There are unheard melodies in the woods, there are unheard harmonies in the air, which sound in the ears of the musician, and which he brings to us as a gift, worthy of the gods; there are beauties of line and colour in Nature, which it is for the painter's eye to seize on, and by which he expresses in a sensible form, the true idea of flower, or cloud, or man.

The sunrise and sunset, the spring and the autumn, the rocks, the trees, the brown earth itself, tell me of things which I care infinitely more about, than the cut-and-dried statements of the daily press, or the words of assembled parliaments where men meet

"And debate if abolishing Corn Laws be righteous and wise,  
If 'twere proper sirocco should vanish in black from the skies!"

Merely formal intellect has usurped too large a place in our civilization; and one of the most striking signs of this is the number of millionaires, whose fortunes have been made by mere speculation on the labour of others, and the success of that intellectual robber's den, the Stock Exchange.

We have accustomed ourselves to despise instinct, and to respect intellect, till we have forgotten that man's noblest and strongest actions, are those which issue directly from his inmost nature, as the blood circulates from his heart, without the sanction of a syllogism.

In this contest the words which Leibnitz applied to one of the arts may have an extended significance: "*musica est raptus numerare se nescientis animae*," music is the unconscious mathematics of the soul; for Art, by means of sound,

or line, or colour, expresses facts which are quite as real as, and a thousand times more important than, those of a lower order, which the intellect can formulate; and the truths about God, about Heaven, about Immortality, in the description of which the mere intellect loses itself in hopeless contradictions, become immediate in the conceptions of the Artist. Hence the close connection between Art and Mythology. At our own time the weakness of Art, from the Mythology, acceptable to us all; each artist, to create his own mythology. "What the Greeks with their cultivated intellects, only shows that he has not attained gods, from which the ideal has reality a thousand times more potent than the realities of common parlance. The common intellect believes in the reality of material objects, so those men believed in God."<sup>1</sup>

The art of the future must be simple and *naïve*, as children are, and this can only be attained by those who patiently seek for what is good, making not money but health, not possessions but energy, not luxury but peace, the end and aim of life.

And in the history of this art of the future, which will be popular, in the sense that it will have in it elements appealing to the larger public, and refined, in the sense that it will have notes heard only by those whose foot is already placed on the next step to which humanity is to rise, he will hold no unimportant place whose insight into the nobility of man, and perception of nature's highest beauties, is not incompatible with the love of the commonest objects around him. He expresses much better than I can hope to do what I want to say, so with his words I will bid you farewell.

<sup>1</sup> Schelling. *Philosophie der Kunst*.



"A strong-fibred Joyousness and Faith, and the sense of Health *al fresco*, may well enter into the preparation of future noble authorship. Part of the test of a great literatus, shall be the absence in him of the idea of the covert, the artificial, the lurid, the maleficent, the devil, grim estimates inherited from the Puritans, hell, natural depravity, and the like. The great literatus will be known among the rest by his cheerful simplicity, his adherence to natural standards, his limitless faith in God, his reverence, and by the absence in him of doubt, *ennui*, burlesque, persiflage, or any strained and temporary fashion. . . . Offsetting the material civilization of our race, our nationality, its wealth, territories, factories, population, luxuries, products, trade, and military and naval strength, and breathing the breath of life into all these and more, must be its Moral Civilization,—the formulation, expression, and aidancy whereof is the very highest height of literature. . . . The true question to ask respecting a book is, 'Has it helped any human soul?' . . . Present literature, while magnificently fulfilling certain popular demands, with plenteous knowledge and verbal smartness, is profoundly sophisticated, insane, and its very joy is morbid. It needs to retain the knowledge and fulfil the demands, but needs to purge itself; or rather, it needs to be born again, become unsophisticated, become sane. It needs to tally and express Nature, and the spirit of Nature, and know and obey the standards. I say the question of Nature, largely considered, involves the question of the æsthetic, the emotional, the religious,—and involves happiness. A fitly born and bred race, growing up in right conditions of outdoor as much as indoor harmony, activity, and development, would probably from and in those conditions, find it enough merely to live,—and



would, in their relations to the sky, air, water, trees, etc., and to the countless common shows, and in the fact of Life itself, discover and achieve happiness,—with Being suffused night and day by wholesome ecstasy, surpassing all the pleasures that wealth, amusement, and even gratified intellect, condition, or the sense of

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“Furthermore intended at most conscience, the and of good at accumulated, it has in towering sciences, indicating mortal.

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partially call Nature, is obtainable by the physical, the sense of matter, so it must be distinctly, comprehending these, Moral and Spiritual Con- beyond the ostensible, the

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“As within the purposes of the Kosmos, and vivifying all meteorology, and all the congeries of the mineral, vegetable, and animal worlds,—all the physical growth and development of man, and all the history of the race in politics, religion, wars, etc., there is a moral purpose, a visible or invisible intention, certainly underlying all, . . . This is the last, profoundest measure and best of a first-rate literary or æsthetic achievement, and when understood and put in force must fain, I say, lead to works, books, nobler than any hitherto known. Lo! Nature (the only complete, actual poem) is existing calmly in the divine scheme, containing all content, careless of the criticism of a day, or these endless wordy chatterers. And lo! to the consciousness of the soul, the permanent Identity, the thought, the something before which the magnitude, even of Democracy, Art, Literature, etc.,

dwindles, becomes partial, measurable,—something that fully satisfies (which these do not). That something is the All, and the idea of All, with the accompanying idea of Eternity, and of itself the Soul, buoyant, indestructible, sailing space for ever, visiting every region, as a ship the sea. And again, lo! the pulsations in all matter, all spirit, throbbing for ever—the eternal beats, the eternal systole and diastole of life in things,—whereupon I feel and know that death is not the ending, as was thought, but rather the real beginning,—and that nothing ever is or can be lost, nor ever die, nor soul, nor matter. . . .

“Of Life immense in passion, pulse and power,  
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,  
The Modern Man I sing.”

“Aware of the fresh free giver, the glowing Missouri aware of mighty  
Niagara,  
Aware of the buffalo herds grazing the plains, the hirsute and strong-  
breasted bull,  
Of earth, rocks, Fifth-month flowers experienced, starry rain, snow, my  
amaze,  
Having studied the mocking-bird's tones, and the flight of the mountain-  
hawk,

And heard at dusk the unrivall'd one, the hermit thrush from the swamp  
cedars,

Solitary, singing of the West, I strike up for a New World,  
I celebrate myself, and sing myself,

And what I assume, you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good as belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Creeds and schools in abeyance,  
Retiring back awhile, sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,  
I harbour for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard  
Nature without check with original energy.

\* \* \* \* \*

My respiration, and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of  
 blood and air through my lungs,  
 The sniff of green leaves, and dry leaves, and of the shore, and the dark  
 coloured sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,  
 The sound of the belch'd words of my voice, loos'd to the eddies of the  
 wind,

A few light kiss  
 The play of shi  
 The delight alo  
 sides,  
 The feeling of h  
 and meet

You shall no lo  
 through t.  
 You shall not lo  
 You shall listen t.

Oxen that rattle the yoke, and chain or halt in the leafy shade, what is it  
 that you express in your eyes?

It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life.

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck on my distant and day-  
 long ramble,

They rise together, they circle slowly around,

I believe in those winged purposes,

And acknowledge, red, yellow, white, playing within me,

And consider green and violet, and the tufted crown, intentional,

And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is not something else,

And the jay of the woods never studied the gamut, yet trills pretty well to  
 me,

And the look of the bay mare, shames silliness out of me.

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-  
 contained,

I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
 They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,  
 They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,

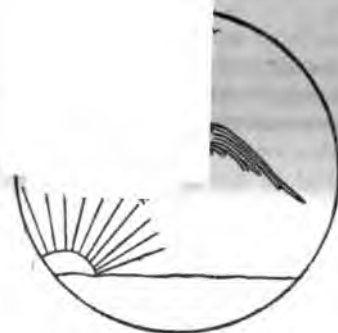
No one is dissatisfied, no one is demented with the mania of owning things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind, that lived thousands of years ago,  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

So they show their relations to me, and I accept them,  
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly in their possession.

I wonder where did they get those tokens,  
Did I pass that way huge times ago, and negligently drop them.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sail forth,—steer for the deep waters only,  
Reckless, O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,  
For we are bound, where mariner has not yet dared to go,  
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.



















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